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THE MODERN CHESS SACRIFICE

With a treatise on the theory of sacrifice, and a classification of sacrifices by type

Leonid Shamkovich
International Chess Grandmaster

The Modern Chess Sacrifice

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Leonid Shamkovich
International Grandmaster

DAVID McKAY COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Shamkovich, Leonid Aleksandrovich.
The modern chess sacrifice.

Includes index.
1. Chess—Middle games. 2. Chess—Openings.
I. Title.
GV1450.3.S52 794.1'2 78–2770
ISBN 0–679–13054–3

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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"A thousand paths lead to delusion, but only one to the truth"
JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Foreword

Combination, attack, and sacrifice: are these not the spellbinding elements of chess that inflame the imagination of the true chess lover? A real sacrifice, to which this book is primarily devoted, invariably calls for creativity, risk, and imagination. In this work, the author rigorously classifies and analyzes the many types of sacrifice from the viewpoint of both attack and defense. Lively and unorthodox, this material can be of great value to a player intent on improving his opening and middlegame.

Introduction

The sacrifice—a mysterious and inspiring element in chess! Hardly a chess lover has not been carried away by the fantastic sacrifices culminating in mate created by the "old masters" of combination and attack. There was a time when the amount of material sacrificed was the chief esthetic yardstick in chess. However, with the passage of time, the approach to the sacrifice changed dramatically. Once a purely heroic deed, the sacrifice has turned into a major chess technique, rich in ideas and varied in form. As any skilled chess player knows, very often the sacrifice is not only possible but imperative, required by the logic of events on the board. Nonetheless, today as at the dawn of the game, it is precisely its romantic aspect that arouses the greatest controversy: if a sacrifice fails to result in a clear win, does it still have merit? Thorough understanding of this problem is indispensable for chess players of any rank if they want to improve their game. Why and when is a real sacrifice possible and necessary? How can one judge whether a sacrifice is correct or incorrect? In this book the author seeks to answer these questions using as a guide the enormous wealth of contemporary practical experience and research into the opening game and naturally paying homage to the "evergreen" classic specimens.

The Modern Chess Sacrifice

CHAPTER I

Absolute and Relative Value of the Pieces

The beginner devoutly observes one of the first ground rules from the chess primer: the Bishop (and the Knight) is worth three pawns, the Rook four and a half or five, and the Queen nine, though the figures may vary depending on the tastes of the primer's author. This constitutes the absolute value of the pieces. At the beginning these values are often (sometimes exclusively) relied on as a means to evaluate play and carefully calculated before every exchange. However, in practice every player soon learns the "erratic" behavior of the pieces: all of a sudden the Bishop turns out to be stronger than the Rook, two minor pieces overpower the Queen, and even the pawn, the humble "unit of measurement," gains tremendous power when on the seventh rank ready to Queen. The chess matter revolts; the value of the pieces becomes relative. Now, to Anderssen's immortal game.

London, 1815

KING'S GAMBIT

Anderssen — *Kieseritzky*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. P–KB4 PxP 3. B–B4 Q–R5ch 4. K–B1 P–QN4!? 5. BxP N–KB3 6. N–KB3 Q–R3.

Morphy himself played this variation for Black the same way. Today's player would certainly not sacrifice a pawn with 4. . . . P–QN4 and would probably find a better place for the Queen with 6. . . . Q–R4.

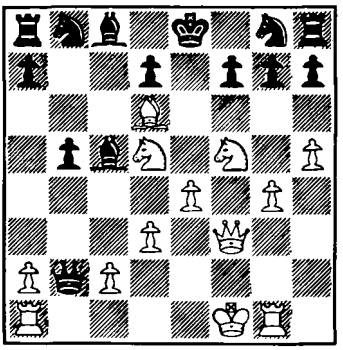
7. P–Q3 N–R4 8. N–R4 Q–N4 9. N–B5 P–QB3 10. P–KN4 N–B3 11. R–N1!

The first of a brilliant series of sacrifices.

11. . . . PxB 12. P–KR4 Q–N3 13. P–R5 Q–N4 14. Q–B3 N–N1

Black's last move is forced since White threatened 15. BxP! However, the loss of the Queen is the lesser evil.

15. BxP Q–B3 16. N–B3 B–B4 17. N–Q5!? QxP 18. B–Q6!!?



The beginning of a marvelously beautiful and daring combination. Many commentators question its correctness, however. Reti showed that White could gain a greater advantage without histrionics with 17. P–Q4!

18. . . . BxR

A historical example of "greediness," which meets with devastating retribution. Steinitz recommended 18. . . . QxRch 19. K–K2 Q–N7, giving a potentially satisfactory defense.

19. P–K5 QxRch 20. K–K2 N–QR3 21. NxPch K–Q1 22. Q–B6ch NxQ 23. B–K7 mate.

By sacrificing two Bishops and a Queen, White utilized his remaining forces to force the mate.

Beginning with the 11th move, the customary values of the pieces ceased to apply. What, then, transpired? The scale of the absolute worth of the pieces only holds true in situations of positional equivalence; whenever a position develops weaknesses and

discordances, that is, when the positional balance is upset, the pieces may acquire properties that they ordinarily lack. Matter revolts. And so White's three minor pieces in the Anderssen–Kieseritzky game prove mightier than the whole army of Black pieces. Rudolf Spielmann, author of the classic *The Art of Sacrifice*, a book still unique today (we shall refer to it more than once, at times arguing, at others agreeing with the author), wrote: "The possibility of conversion of material to force and of force to material represents a remarkable property of chess, perhaps its greatest mystery."

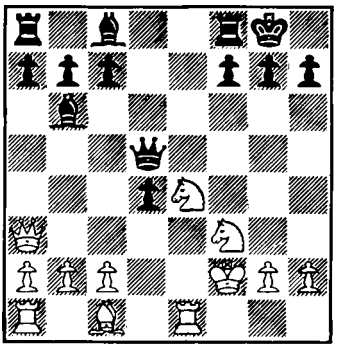
However, before taking up the problems of sacrifice, it is necessary to understand, if only superficially, the nature of sacrifice and its connection with the combination.

CHAPTER II

The Combination and Sacrifice

An interesting discussion about the nature of the combination in chess arose in chess publications about two decades ago. Most of the authors came to the conclusion that sacrifice was intrinsic to the combination: without it, there are only forced maneuvers (variations). M. Botvinnik devoted a special article to this question ("Toward a Definition of the Combination," cf. *Botvinnik's Chess Activity*, Vol. 1), giving this definition: "A combination is a forced variation with a sacrifice." This laconic definition has been accepted by modern theory. However, to render the logical and ideological gist of a combination, a broader definition is more appropriate: a correct combination is a sequence of logically connected forced variations embodying a sacrifice and leading to a clear advantage for the active player. By clear advantage is meant a mating attack or material gain. Ordinarily the sacrifice is a prelude to the combination. At times it may appear toward the end of the "drama" as the coup de grâce, but in any event it is a major element and a distinguishing feature of the combination. Rudolf Spielmann termed the sacrifice inherent in every combination a "pseudosacrifice" since in such a case true sacrifice is nowhere in sight—just a very promising investment. This kind of sacrifice can be alternatively called a *combinational* one. Pseudosacrifices are classified into *mating* and *result-producing*, i.e., giving a decisive material advantage. Here are several typical examples of pseudosacrifice.

Delmar



Richardson

New York, 1887

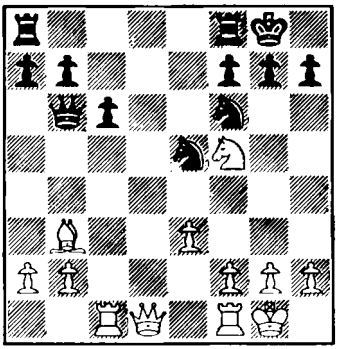
There followed

12. N–B6ch! PxN 13. QxRch!! KxQ 14. B–R6ch K–N1 15. R–K8 mate.

The two successive mating sacrifices served as a prelude to, and in fact the main content of, this spectacular combination which capitalized on the weakness of Black's eighth rank. The forced maneuver here was very brief.

As often as not, the mating sacrifice does not occur until the very end of the "drama," preceded by a more or less prolonged forced maneuver.

Em. Lasker



Alekhine

Zurich, 1934

With a simple introductory maneuver Alekhine prepares the decisive blow:

18. Q–Q6! N/4–Q2 19. KR–Q1 QR–Q1 20. Q–N3 P–N3 21. Q–N5 K–R1

The only defense against the threat of 22. R–Q6.

22. N–Q6 K–N2 23. P–K4 N–KN1 24. R–Q3

White's attack develops menacingly, threatening with 25. R–R3. 24. . . . P–KR3 will be followed by 25. N–B5ch K–R2 26. NxP! P–B3 27. N–B5! PxQ 28. R–R3ch and mate.

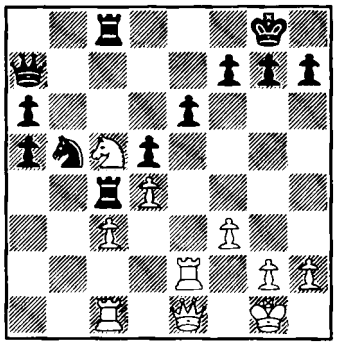
24. . . . P–B3

Alekhine must have foreseen this defense: the Queen's retreat will be followed by 25. . . . N–K4 and Black will be safe.

25. N–B5ch K–R1 26. QxNP!, Black resigned.

And here is a brilliant example of a *result-producing* sacrifice.

Capablanca



Bogolyubov

New York, 1924

31. . . . NxQP!

An introduction to one of Capablanca's celebrated "minor combinations," leading to a prosaic finale.

32. PxN R/1xN!

White resigned since 33. PxR is answered by 33. . . . QxPch, with Black not only recovering the sacrificed Rook but also "incidentally" winning White's Queen.

A combination may sparkle with a whole series of sacrifices, but the upshot of the fireworks may be relatively modest, though essential—a small material gain. A case in point is the well-known combination in an orthodox defense (Queens Gambit Declined):

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. B–N5 B–K2 5. P–K3 O–O 6. N–B3 P–B3 7. R–B1 QN–Q2 8. B–Q3 PxP 9. BxP N–Q4 10. BxB QxB 11. O–O NxN 12. RxN P–K4 13. Q–B2 PxP (The theory recommends 13. . . . P–K5) **14. PxP N–B3**

According to theory, 14. . . . N–N3 15. R–K1 Q–B3 is safer because it prevents White's attacking N–N5.

15. R–K1 Q–Q3 16. N–N5! B–N5!

Alekhine's move. Unsatisfactory are both 16. . . . P–KR3 17. NxP! RxN 18. Q–N6 Q–Q2 19. R–B3 K–B1 20. RxN! PxR (20. . . . RxR 21. Q–R7!) 21. QxPch and 16. . . . Q–B5 17. NxBP! P–QN4 18. B–N3 RxN 19. R–K7 N–Q4 20. BxN PxB 21. RxR QxR 22. RxBch and wins (Levenfish-Rjumin, Moscow 1935). From the opening into a King-and-pawn ending via a combination!

17. R–KN3!?

Stronger probably is the prosaic combination 17. NxBP RxN 18. BxRch KxB 19. Q–N3ch K–B1 20. QxP R–N1 21. QxRP RxP 22. RxP!, which *E.C.O.*, part D (p. 293) sites: White gets the Rook and three pawns for two pieces and some winning chances.

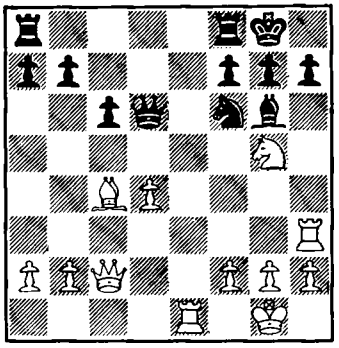
17. . . . B–R4

Also possible is 17. . . . Q–B5! but not 17. . . . QxP due to 18. RxK7 B–R4 19. N–K6!

18. R–KR3 B–N3(?)

18. . . . Q–N5! would foil White's beautiful plan (if 19. R–K5 B–N3). But such is life: without the opponent's errors no player

can be expected to handily win a game, much less create an elegant combination.



Now come some spectacular sacrifices:

19. QxB!! PxQ 20. BxPch RxB 21. R–R8ch! KxR 22. NxRch K–N1 23. NxQ

In the wake of a pretty combination White enters the endgame a pawn up with a good chance of winning.

The above examples of pseudosacrifice clearly suggest that sacrifice, as an element of a combination, always has an explosive character: abruptly, in one blow, it transforms the game into a new state with an imminent forced denouement: *mate* or *material gain.* In each case it is possible to uncover the *reasons* for the sacrifice or the factors that underlie its success (poor development, weakened position or squares). These categories will be used as guidelines in the material that follows.

CHAPTER III

True Sacrifices

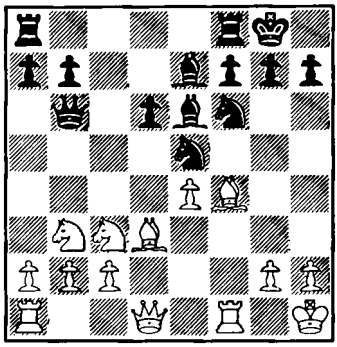
Very often we meet with sacrifices that aim at obtaining positional or other advantages. Such sacrifices are not associated with forced variations leading to material advantage or mate. After the "sacrificial offering" there is nothing imminent in the events on the board. In this kind of sacrifice, we perceive advantages in the new situation which ought to completely offset the loss, in any event as dictated by the logic of practical chess combat. Spielmann called such sacrifices "true sacrifices," suggesting their essential properties: the conflict runs a prolonged course, and the end result is never a certainty.

One often encounters the term "positional sacrifice." Some authors use it in a narrow sense; others assign to it an all-encompassing meaning. In our view, this term is completely applicable to true sacrifices with clear positional implications, such as strategic sacrifices which will be treated later.

As distinct from a pseudosacrifice, a true sacrifice leaves the opponent a measure of freedom of action. The force and correctness of a true sacrifice are tested as the smaller but more active army battles the opposition's superior numbers. The pseudosacrifice settles the positional problem whereas the true sacrifice only poses it anew. In the former case, the crucial factor is calculation of variations whereby the end result of the sacrifice can be accurately predicted. The outcome of a true sacrifice depends on the ability to evaluate a position featuring material imbalance and on intuition; calculation of variations is of secondary importance.

One more significant property of a true sacrifice: it invariably contains an element of calculated risk—lose the initiative and "matter" triumphs. Therein lies its chief "sporting" characteristic.

Boleslavsky



Botvinnik

Sverdlovsk, 1943

White sacrifices a pawn:

13. Q–K2! NxB 14. PxN BxN 15. B–K3 Q–N5

Botvinnik points out Black should have refused the sacrifice and played 15. . . . Q–B3 16. PxB P–Q4 instead.

16. PxB QxNP 17. R–R5!

"White wastes no time in capturing the QRP, but shifts his QR to the K-side via R5. In exchange for the sacrificed pawn White gains excellent placement of his pieces and seizes the initiative for a long time." Such are the motives and goals of Botvinnik's sacrifice. The game shows a typical true sacrifice of a pawn chiefly in order to occupy the Q5- and KB5-squares.

17. . . . Q–K3 18. B–Q4 B–Q1 19. R–KB5 N–Q2 20. Q–N4 N–K4 21. Q–N3 P–B3 22. N–Q5 P–QR3

Black faces a difficult defense since all he can do is try to repulse the White Kingside onslaught executed according to a clear-cut plan. In Botvinnik's opinion, 22. . . . P–QR4 is stronger.

23. Q–R3 R–K1 24. P–KN4 P–R3 25. Q–N3 R–QB1 26. B–B3 P–QR4 27. P–R4 P–QN4 28. Q–R3 N–B2?

While defending against the threat of P–N5 (for example, 28. . . . P–N5 29. BxN QPxB 30. P–N5! P–N3? 31. PxBP!), Black gets into other difficulties. As Botvinnik pointed out, Black should have played 28. . . . K–R2. Then the break 29. P–N5 would have been parried by the simple 29. . . . P–N3.

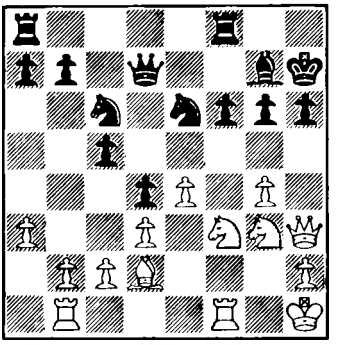
Black's Knight move allows a pseudosacrifice of a piece, forcing a transition to a superior endgame for White.

29. BxBP! BxB 30. NxBch PxN 31. RxP Q–Q2 32. RxN

And White gradually realized his advantage.

In the above example, the true sacrifice was dictated solely by positional considerations; only subsequently did play assume a more palpable and even combinational character. Sacrifices of this sort are known as positional. In most cases, however, the general reasons for a true sacrifice are backed up by variations, and positional considerations are intertwined with combinational ideas; the assessment of the position remains the paramount criterion of a sacrifice. In such a case the true sacrifice becomes a dynamic one.

Kotov



Smyslov

Moscow, 1943

White's initiative is impressive, but is there a way to cash in on it? Smyslov makes a bold decision:

24. N–B5! PxN 25. NPxP N–B2 26. R–N1

In his *Selected Games*, Smyslov writes about 24. N–B5: "A typical piece sacrifice in analogous positions. In this case, however, its peculiarity is that White, rather than strive for an immediate recovery of the sacrificed material, seeks an attack by systematically stepping up pressure on the Black position. Concrete variations are of little help—rather an overall appraisal of the position settles the matter."

Thus a general evaluation, namely opening the KN-file and weakening the Black King's position, played a key role in Smyslov's decision to sacrifice; however, concrete variations were of course also considered. Thus Smyslov had a well-considered plan for 26. . . . R–R1 (in the hope of escaping with the K to KN1): 27. BxP! BxB 28. R–N6 Q–N2 29. RxQch KxR 30. Q–N3ch and 31. QxN; and an equally impressive response to 26. . . . N–K4: 27. RxBch! KxR 28. R–N1ch K–B2 29. Q–R5ch K–K2 30. R–N7ch.

It is also important to note that soon after the sacrifice the game enters a phase of combinational complications.

26. . . . N–K1 27. R–N6 R–B2 28. QR–N1 K–N1 29. RxRP (stronger still is 29. BxP) **29. . . . K–B1 30. R–R7 K–K2 31. Q–R5! K–Q3**

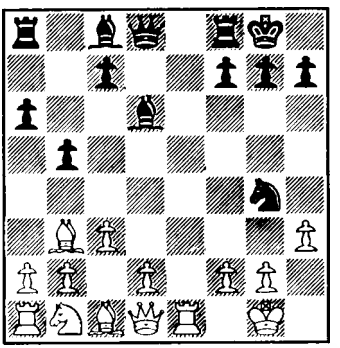
31. . . . R–QB1 would have been followed, according to Smyslov, by 32. N–N5! PxN 33. BxPch with a devastating attack. A pretty variation is 33. . . . K–Q3 34. B–B4ch K–K2 (34. . . . N–K4 35. P–B6!) 35. P–B6ch! NxP 36. R/NxB NxQ 37. RxRch K–K3 38. RxQ NxB 39. RxNP with a won ending.

32. B–B4ch N–K4 33. BxNch PxB 34. P–B6! (a beautiful problem move deciding the game) **34. . . . NxP 35. QxPch K–B3 36. R/RxB K–N4 37. NxPch K–N3 38. P–N4 R–QB1 39. RxR QxR 40. Q–Q6ch R–B3 41. NxR NxKP 42. PxPch, Black resigned.**

Evaluation and Calculation

Thus, evaluation of the position in a practical situation is the chief criterion of positional sacrifices, a more reliable yardstick than calculation of complicated and branched variations. Nevertheless, combinational calculations may and must back up the general considerations, at least to some extent.

Detailed analysis of a game or a complicated middlegame position is approached in a somewhat different way, laying much greater emphasis on analysis proper, on the calculation of concrete variations. Of course, much depends on the character of the position and of . . . the analyst. It is well known that Capablanca more or less ignored prolonged variations in his comments and fundamental books, giving preference to general considerations deriving from his impeccable insights into each position and his knowledge of chess logic. But even the great Cuban once proved fallible. In 1918, Capablanca played a famous game against Marshall in which the American champion devised a bold counter-attack in Ruy Lopez (called in honor of the inventor the "Marshall Attack"). Commenting on this game in his books *My Chess Career* and (later) *A Textbook of Chess*, Capablanca dwelt at length on one of the key positions of the system.



This position emerged after thirteen moves:

RUY LOPEZ

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–QR3 4. B–R4 N–KB3 5. O–O B–K2 6. R–K1 P–QN4 7. B–N3 O–O 8. P–B3 P–Q4!? 9. PxP NxP 10. NxP!

"Honor demanded that I capture the pawn and accept the challenge, the more so since my knowledge and perception suggested that my position was defensible," wrote Capablanca.

10. . . . NxN 11. RxN N–B3

Nowadays 11. . . . P–QB3 is normal.

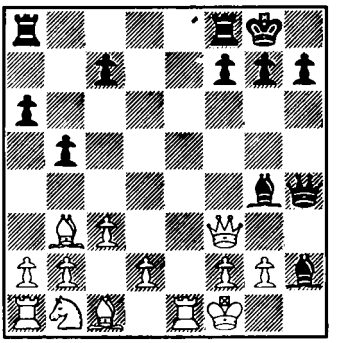
12. R–K1 B–Q3 13. P–KR3 N–N5!?

This time Capablanca refused to accept the gift. He chose instead a sound move **14. Q–B3!**; after **14. . . . Q–R5 15. P–Q4! NxP?! 16. R–K2** (16. QxN? B–R7ch! 17. K–B1 B–N6 but not 16. . . . B–N6? due to 17. QxPch!) **16. . . . B–N5?! 17. PxB B–R7ch 18. K–B1 B–N6 19. RxN,** he won a magnificent victory in that historic game which to this day serves as an example of level-headed defense and counterattack.

"The Knight could not be accepted—14. PxN because of . . . Q–R5 15. Q–B3 Q–R7ch 16. K–B1 BxP 17. QxB Q–R8ch 18. K–K2 QR–K1ch, giving Black a victory," wrote Capa. This variation suited everybody and retained its popularity for many years until in 1951 a chess player from Leningrad found a stunning blow, 19. B–K6!!, that turned the tables in Capablanca's variation: now White, not Black, wins (19. . . . Q–R3 20. P–Q4 RxBch 21. K–Q3, etc.).

Another analysts' suggestion has proved equally unsound: 15. . . . BxP 16. P–KN3 Q–R4 due to 17. Q–N2 (also possible is 17. . . . Q–R1) QR–K1 18. R–K3. Could it be that the sacrifice of a Knight was incorrect and Capablanca could safely accept it?

Finally, this author succeeded in proving that after 14. PxN Black actually had a forced win although in a different variation: 14. . . . Q–R5 15. Q–B3 B–R7ch! 16. K–B1 BxP and further.



After 16. . . . BxP (analysis)

(a) 17. P–KN3 B–R6ch 18. K–K2 QR–K1ch 19. K–Q1 B–N5!

(b) 17. Q–K4 B–B5! 18. P–KN3 Q–R7! 19. R–K3 QR–K1 20. Q–Q5 BxNP!, routing the opponent (21. PxB B–R6ch 22. K–K1 Q–N8ch 23. K–K2 Q–B8 mate; if 22. QxPch, then the simple . . . K–R1!, but not 22. . . . RxQ?? 23. RxR mate).

So Capablanca's intuition served him as faithfully as ever at the crucial instant of his duel with Marshall: indeed, the Knight could not be captured. What can be faulted is the world champion's reasoning behind his correct decision.

* * *

Thus there are two kinds of sacrifice in chess: pseudosacrifice (combinational) and true sacrifice. This book is concerned with true sacrifices in all their diversity, primarily in the opening phase of the game.

CHAPTER IV

Paul Morphy's Behests

The opening is a stage at which the forces should be mobilized and deployed. The middlegame depends on successful development in the opening, and a serious violation of the opening principles may entail a speedy debacle. The basic laws of the opening were most clearly and vividly demonstrated a century ago by the great American chess player Paul Morphy. With his remarkable games, he showed the world for the first time the enormous importance of the center and of the element of time, the principle of fast and vigorous development of the pieces—a paramount factor for open game. Consider his celebrated game played against Count Isouard and the Duke of Braunschweig.

Paris, 1858

PHILIDOR DEFENSE

Morphy *Consultants*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 B–N5? 4. PxP BxN 5. QxB PxP 6. B–B4 N–KB3 7. Q–QN3!

Black's position is already hopeless—two pawns are threatened simultaneously.

7. . . . Q–K2 8. N–B3!

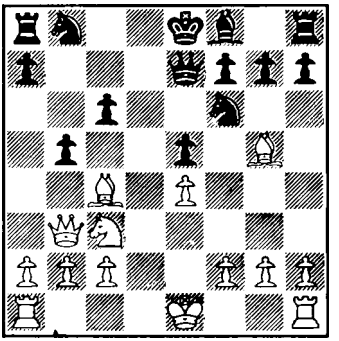
Capturing the pawn on QN7 would clearly suffice to win—but that would be a victory "on points" (8. . . . Q–N5ch). Black's Queen stands too poorly to warrant an exchange of Queen's, so White plays 8. N–B3.

8. . . . P–B3 9. B–KN5!

Not simply development, but purposeful development. Pinning the N on KB3 will play an important part in the game.

9. . . . P–N4?

A naive move which takes for granted that White's B will retreat. Better is 9. . . . P–QN3.



10. NxP!

The first of a whole series of sacrifices. Capitalizing on the constrained and insufficiently developed placement of the Black pieces, White brings up his forces at lightning speed for the decisive attack.

10. . . . PxN 11. BxPch QN–Q2 12. O–O–O R–Q1 13. RxN! RxR 14. R–Q1 Q–K3 15. BxRch

White's position is so good that it even offers a mate-in-two: 15. BxN QxQ 16. BxR mate. But the finale of the game is more elegant still.

15. . . . NxB 16. Q–N8ch! NxQ 17. R–Q8 mate

In this game, Morphy energetically and steadfastly exploited the opponents' violation of the opening principles, particularly the basic of basics, timely development of the pieces. In the opening one should put the pieces into play as fast as possible, try to occupy the center, and act according to plan. To violate these principles (yielding the center, creating weaknesses in one's position, or developing with unjustifiable tardiness—what is known as unlawful upsetting of the balance) is to court trouble. As often as

not, the opponent exploits such violations with a sacrifice, the most radical and vigorous technique.

* * *

We are about to embark on the study of the most typical thematic true sacrifices occurring at the early stage of the modern chess game. Taking the simple terminology introduced by Spielmann in a somewhat extended version, we can classify the various true sacrifices typical of the opening game into five types: Sacrifice of Pursuit (Chapter V), Developing Sacrifice (Chapter VI), Preventive Sacrifice (Chapter VII), Retarding Sacrifice (Chapter VIII), and Strategic Sacrifice (Chapter IX). Chapter X is devoted to the most important aspects of pawn sacrifices in the opening.

The chapters are ordered in accordance with methodological principles. Every chapter contains recommendations and detailed analyses (with reference to present-day games), mapping the course of action to be taken in response to the opponent's erroneous or dubious moves in various openings. That all such "punitive" actions are associated with sacrifice is no accident. On the contrary, this approach demonstrates the dynamic and combative spirit which permeates modern chess.

CHAPTER V

Sacrifice of Pursuit

A respectable chess King, preferring to sit out the heat of battle in the safest place possible, is sometimes compelled to abandon his place of refuge and run the gauntlet of enemy fire across the whole board. Clearly, no King would voluntarily dare to undertake this supremely dangerous "stroll." However, a sacrifice (usually a piece or even two pieces) sometimes succeeds in forcing the King to set off on the risky journey. Spielmann gave a clear definition of this kind of sacrifice: "The sacrifice of pursuit is aimed at driving out the enemy King to expose him to attack with the board full of pieces." Obviously, an effective sacrifice of pursuit can only result from a serious blunder in the opening, such as an unjustified weakening of the crucial KB2-square. The specific nature of this type of sacrifice will enable us to discuss some important theoretical problems of modern real sacrifice in general.

An Undying Theme

The sacrifice of pursuit was well known to our chess ancestors. Here is a game from the manuscript of the famous Italian chess player Giachino Greco (1656): **1. P–K4 P–K4 2. P–KB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 P–KN4 4. B–B4 P–N5 5. BxPch!** (the first of a series of pursuing sacrifices) **5. . . . KxB 6. N–K5ch K–K3?** (correct of course is 6. . . . K–K1) **7. QxPch KxN 8. Q–B5ch K–Q3 9. P–Q4 B–N2 10. BxPch K–K2 11. B–N5ch B–B3 12. P–K5 BxB 13. QxBch K–K1** (the Black King has returned home . . . only to set off on a new dangerous journey) **14. Q–R5ch K–K2 15. O–O! Q–K1 16. Q–N5ch K–K3 17. R–B6ch!** (the third and decisive sacrifice) **17. . . . NxR**

18. QxNch K–Q4 19. N–B3ch KxP 20. Q–B4ch K–B4 21. P–N4ch K–B3 22. Q–B4ch K–N3 23. N–R4 mate.

Beginning with the 6th move everything was forced, leading up to the planned mating finale.

The following game was played two centuries later.

Paris, 1858

TWO KNIGHTS DEFENSE

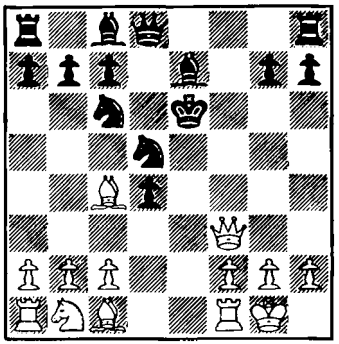
Morphy *NN*

A session with six simultaneous blindfold games.

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 N–B3 4. P–Q4 PxP 5. N–N5 P–Q4 6. PxP NxP?

Stronger is 6. . . . N–QR4 or 6. . . . N–K4.

7. O–O B–K2 8. NxBP! KxN 9. Q–B3ch K–K3



10. N–B3!!

The most remarkable in the series of sacrifices. Having sacrificed a N on his 8th move, White burned the bridges and now has only one alternative: to attack and mate the enemy King. But the QR must be brought into play, and a sacrifice of a Knight is the shortest cut to the goal. Apparently Morphy reasoned along these or similar lines when making his 10th move: in a blindfold session he could hardly afford to calculate all variations to the mating

conclusion. Thus it seems obvious that White's 8th and 10th moves are logically connected elements of a genuine sacrifice of pursuit. Incidentally, the move 10. N–QB3 is at the same time a vivid example of a developing sacrifice.

10. . . . PxN 11. R–K1ch N–K4 12. B–B4 B–B3 13. BxN BxB 14. RxBch!

The final sacrifice of pursuit, bringing the plan to culmination.

14. . . . KxR 15. R–K1ch K–Q5 16. BxN! R–K1

16. . . . PxP also leads to mate: 17. R–K4ch K–B4 18. Q–B3ch est.

17. Q–Q3ch K–B4 18. P–N4ch KxP 19. Q–Q4ch K–R4 20. QxBPch K–R5 21. Q–N3ch K–R4 22. Q–R3ch K–N4 23. R–N1 mate

These classic examples suggest that the sacrifice of pursuit, whether false or genuine, must be quite significant. Indeed, you can hardly expect to lure the enemy King into your camp with a mere pawn; a piece is the least price you will have to pay in such a case. At the same time, a sacrifice of pursuit can seldom if ever be calculated to the very end. Only a few games can be found in the annals of chess which feature full-fledged pseudosacrifices of pursuit. Here are two graphic examples.

London, 1912

SKITTLES GAME

Ed. Lasker — *Thomas*

1. P–Q4 P–KB4 2. N–KB3 P–K3 3. N–B3 N–KB3 4. B–N5 B–K2 5. BxN BxB 6. P–K4 PxP 7. QNxP P–QN3 8. N–K5 O–O 9. B–Q3 B–N2 10. Q–R5 Q–K2?? 11. QxPch!!

A sacrifice of the Queen leading to a forced mate of rare beauty: with a King move!

11. . . . KxQ 12. NxB dbl ch K–R3 13. N/K–N4ch

White could force mate even faster with 13. N/6–N4ch K–R4 14. B–N6ch K–N4 15. P–R4ch K–B5 16. P–N3 mate. It's faster but not as pretty!

13. . . . K–N4 14. P–R4ch K–B5 15. P–N3ch K–B6 16. B–K2ch

Edward Lasker pointed out that after 16. O–O and 17. N–R2ch White would have mated his opponent a move earlier.

16. . . . K–N7 17. R–R2ch K–N8 18. K–Q2 mate

Or 18. O–O–O! mate.

U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP, 1958

SICILIAN DEFENSE

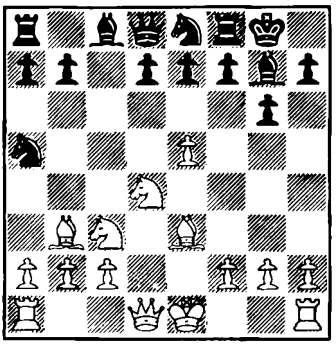
Fischer *Reshevsky*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–KN3 6. B–K3 B–N2 7. B–QB4 O–O 8. B–N3 N–QR4?

A "natural" move with an unexpected outcome. Correct is 8. . . . P–Q3.

9. P–K5! N–K1

In Bastrikov-Shamkovich, Russian Federation Championship, Sochi 1958, played several months earlier, Black smelled the rat and preferred the variation 9. . . . NxB 10. KPxN NxR 11. PxB KxP but could not save the game. On his part, Reshevsky chose to "drain the cup."



10. BxPch!! KxB

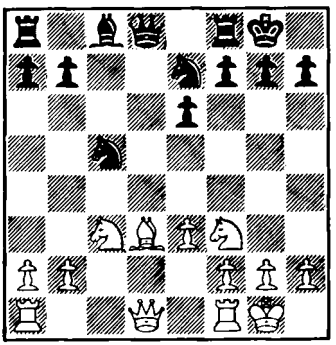
After 10. . . . RxB 11. N–K6, Black loses his Queen.

11. N–K6!

The crowning move of White's opening combination. To save his Queen Black has to capture the "impudent" Knight with his King: but 11. . . . KxN leads to mate in several moves (12. Q–Q5ch, etc.). Réshevsky preferred to part with his Queen but had to lay down his arms very soon. This beautiful combination is far from new. A similar example is given in Tarrasch's *The Game of Chess*: 1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 N–B3 4. P–Q4 PxP 5. O–O P–Q3 6. NxP B–K2 7. N–QB3 O–O 8. P–KR3 R–K1 9. R–K1 N–Q2?? 10. BxPch! KxB 11. N–K6!, etc.

The overwhelming majority of sacrifices of pursuit encountered in practice are really dynamic sacrifices.

Molina



Capablanca

Buenos Aires, 1911

12. BxPch!

To dare to make this seemingly obvious sacrifice, White had to do some hard thinking. In *My Chess Career*, Capablanca writes: "In this position the combination is rather unusual. When the position is so balanced and so few pieces are developed, an attack seems hardly possible. It should be noted, however, that White can rapidly bring up a N and a R for the attack. In the final analysis the combination seems to be correct."

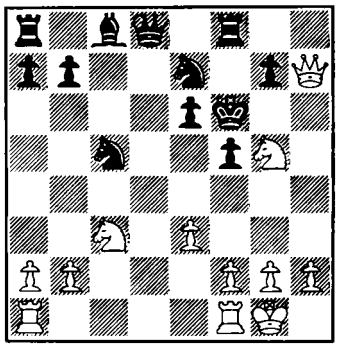
According to the present-day definition, White aims at a real dynamic sacrifice. Capablanca's comments indicate that White's

sacrifice was motivated by the possibility of rapidly mobilizing his pieces (besides the perilous position of the Black King). At the same time, it was clearly impossible to calculate this "combination" to a logical end, though White could not but consider numerous subtle variations of the combination—both when sacrificing his Bishop and later on in the game.

12. . . . KxB 13. N–N5ch K–N3 14. Q–N4 P–B4

The only possible move. 14. . . . P–K4 would be followed, as Capablanca pointed out, by an elegant variation: 15. N–K6ch K–B3 16. P–B4! P–K5 17. Q–N5ch KxN 18. Q–K5ch K–Q2 19. KR–Q1ch N–Q6 20. NxKP K–B3 21. RxN! QxR 22. R–B1ch with a rout.

15. Q–N3 K–R3 16. Q–R4ch K–N3 17. Q–R7ch K–B3



White's operation has finally lost all the clarity and unambiguity of a combination. Black has repulsed the first onslaught, is a piece up, and even threatens to win White's Queen with 18. . . . R–R1. White has several tempting options of attack: 18. QR–Q1, 18. Q–R4, and others. But which one should he choose?

18. P–K4!

Only thus can new power be infused into the attack, since the threat is 19. P–K5ch. To capture the White Knight is still bad in view of 19. QxNPch K–R4 20. N–K2!

18. . . . N–N3 19. PxP

As Capablanca pointed out, stronger is 19. P–B4! PxP 20. QR–Q1 Q–N3 21. R–Q6 with decisive threats.

19. . . . PxP 20. QR–Q1 N–Q6 21. Q–R3 N/6–B5?

Capablanca remarks that Black could also have played the energetic 21. . . . N/3–B5. Analysis shows that that was the only move which gave Black good counterchances. Here are some sample variations: 21. . . . N/3–B5! 22. Q–N3 R–R1 23. R–Q2 (if 23. N–R3 then 23. . . . RxN! 24. PxR B–K3) 23. . . . B–K3 24. KR–Q1 B–B5 25. N–B3 P–KN3 and White finds it difficult to continue to increase pressure.

22. Q–N3 Q–B2 23. KR–K1!

White brings up reserves to deal a final blow.

23. . . . N–K7ch?

In positions of this sort, the attacker is liable to be thrown off track in pursuit of red herrings. However, the defender faces even greater problems, and in fact Black is doomed. The most stubborn defense is 23. . . . B–Q2 (but not 23. . . . B–K3 24. RxBch! NxR 25. N–Q5ch) 24. N–Q5ch! NxN 25. N–R7ch K–B2 26. QxQ NxQ 27. RxBch K–N1 28. NxR, etc.

24. RxN QxQ 25. N–R7ch!

Black overlooked this intermediate check.

25. . . . K–B2 26. RPxQ R–R1 27. N–N5ch K–B3 28. P–B4, Black resigned.

Modern Examples

The sacrifice of pursuit is a familiar sight these days. Its usually positional nature is perhaps more clearly expressed now than in times gone by. A dashing charge for the jackpot is no longer a necessary product of a sacrifice, any sacrifice, including one of pursuit: the counterattack has assumed a far more important role. The following game with its opening, dramatic battle, and giddying sacrifices is however surprisingly reminiscent of the old masters' works; only Black's ferocious resistance "modernizes" it.

Moscow, 1960

PHILIDOR DEFENSE

Vasiukov *Lebedev*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 N–Q2 4. B–QB4 P–KR3?

This move has long been justifiably rejected in view of the following sacrifice:

5. PxP PxP 6. BxPch! KxB 7. NxPch K–B3 8. N–QB3!

Played in good style. Theory recommends 8. Q–Q4; however, following 8. . . . P–B4 9. Q–Q5 (or 9. NxNch K–K2) 9. . . . Q–K1, Black has a fair chance of successful defense. By sacrificing another piece White strengthens the attack considerably.

8. . . . KxN

Black had no alternative: White threatened 9. Q–B3ch.

9. Q–R5ch P–N4 10. BxP! PxB

If 10. . . . QxB? then White would counter with 11. P–B4ch! KxP 12. R–B1ch K–K4 13. R–B5ch QxR 14. QxQch K–Q3 15. O–O–Och K–K2 16. N–Q5ch K–Q1 17. N–B4! and Black cannot avoid a defeat.

11. P–B4ch K–K3 12. P–B5ch!

This racy pawn is destined to play an important part in the attack.

12. . . . K–K2 13. N–Q5ch K–Q3 14. QxR KN–B3 15. O–O–O K–B3 16. KR–K1 P–N3!

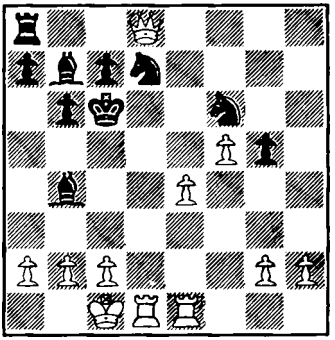
Having level-headedly repulsed the stormy attack, Black has led his King to a relatively safe place, destroying two of the opponent's minor pieces en route, and now the King has a path of further retreat open to him. Material equality has been reestablished (a Rook and three pawns versus three minor pieces), but if Black succeeds in completely securing his King he will easily activate his pieces, gaining the advantage. White cannot procrastinate—the bold opening calls for an equally bold follow-up.

17. N–N4ch!

Now 17. . . . K–N2 is answered with 18. P–K5, pinning the Bishop on KB8. But is it firmly pinned?

17. . . . BxN! 18. QxQ B–N2

The Queen is trapped. But now it is White's turn to shoot!



19. RxN! NxR

No point in capturing the Queen: 19. . . . RxQ 20. RxR BxR 21. P–K5 and the White pawns are unstoppable.

20. QxP BxR

An extremely rare balance of forces has arisen: a Queen and four pawns versus a Rook and three minor pieces—again a rough material equality! This arithmetic is not all that important though; in this unusual material situation, the activity of the pieces and pawns becomes decisive. Black soon has to part with a piece for almost any one of White's passed pawns.

21. Q–K3 B–R5 22. Q–R6ch B–B3 23. P–K5 R–KB1 24. PxB RxP 25. Q–B4 B–B1 26. P–KN4! N–B4 27. P–N4 N–N2 28. Q–K4ch K–Q2 29. Q–Q4ch R–Q3 30. Q–N7ch K–B3 31. P–B6 N–Q1 32. P–B7 NxP 33. QxN, Black resigned.

The following game features a rather uncomplicated sacrifice of a piece.

U.S.S.R. CHAMPIONSHIP

Leningrad, 1956

PIRC DEFENSE

Tal *Simagin*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q4 P–Q3 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. P–B4

The transposition of moves brings about a Pirc Defense variation favorable to White.

4. . . . Q–N3 5. N–B3 B–N5 6. B–K2 QN–Q2 7. P–K5!

White has achieved a considerable preponderance in the center and now takes the offensive.

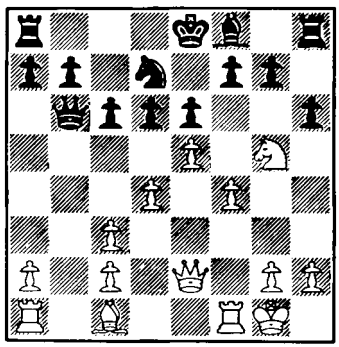
7. . . . N–Q4 8. O–O! NxN

This leads to a dangerous opening of the QN-file, but Black is no longer able to avoid trouble. 8. . . . P–K3 is parried with a very strong 9. N–K4, and 8. . . . P–N3 is followed by 9. K–R1 B–N2 10. N–N5 BxB 11. QxB P–K3 12. P–B5!

9. PxN P–K3?

A serious error. An exchange on KB6 is necessary. True, the continuation 9. . . . BxN 10. BxB PxP 11. PxP NxP 12. B–B4! is clearly to White's advantage (Black is hopelessly behind in development), but 10. . . . P–K3 is possible.

10. N–N5! BxB 11. QxB P–KR3



Now comes a "thematic" sacrifice on KB7, luring the Black King into a dangerous zone.

12. NxBP! KxN 13. P–B5! QPxP

Black's other options are hardly better; for instance, 13. . . . KPxP 14. P–K6ch K–K1 (14. . . . K–K2 15. R–N1!) 15. Q–R5ch K–Q1 16. PxN KxP 17. QxPch, or 13. . . . NxP 14. PxPch KxP 15. B–K3 Q–N4 16. Q–B2, etc.

14. PxPch KxP 15. R–N1! QxR

An attempt to payoff with a Queen. The continuation 15. . . . Q–B2 16. Q–B4ch K–K2 17. R–B7ch K–Q1 18. B–K3 would deprive Black of the last glimmer of hope.

16. Q–B4ch K–Q3 17. B–R3ch K–B2 18. RxQ BxB 19. Q–N3!

One more surprise: with this "fork" White wins the QNP without losing the momentum of his attack.

19. . . . B–K2 20. QxPch K–Q3

Now 21. R–Q1! would have led to a quick victory. Tal played somewhat weaker: **21. PxPch,** but the ultimate outcome was the same. Sacrifices of pursuit as obvious as in the preceding examples (in the first example, the sacrifice was supported by the authority of classical theory) are seldom encountered in modern serious practice. More often the sacrifice of pursuit looks like an unexpected and paradoxical decision.

Zurich, 1959

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Kupper *Tal*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. B–KN5 P–K3 7. P–B4 P–N4

Polugaevsky's debatable variation, which after 8. P–K5 PxP 9. PxP Q–B2 leads to infinite complications. The Swiss master chooses a calmer continuation, one which denies White any advantage, though.

8. Q–B3 B–N2 9. B–Q3 B–K2 10. O–O–O Q–N3 11. KR–K1 QN–Q2 12. N/3–K2

More natural is 12. N–N3.

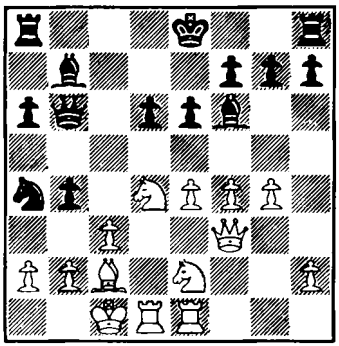
12. . . . N–B4

In no hurry to castle, Tal creates threats in the center and on the Queenside.

13. BxN?

A poor move: the threat of a pawn storm on the Kingside turns out to be an illusion, whereas Black's KB enters the attack at once —even if the attack is far from orthodox.

13. . . . BxB 14. P–KN4 N–R5 15. P–B3 P–N5 16. B–B2



White seems to defuse the opponent's thrust: after 16. . . . N–B4 17. P–N5 White has nothing to fear. But . . .

16. . . . NxNP!! 17. KxN PxP dbl ch 18. KxP

White's King finds itself on the third rank right in the midst of battle, and Black's pieces are very active—a sure guarantee that the sacrifice of pursuit will bear fruit.

18. . . . O–O 19. QR–N1 Q–R4ch 20. K–Q3 QR–B1!

The most vigorous response.

21. Q–B2

If 21. RxB QxR with the same attack and material equality.

21. . . . B–R1 22. R–N3

The commentators suggested a stronger continuation: 22. KR–QB1, but all the same after 22. . . . P–K4! 23. P–N5 PxN 24. PxB BxPch! 25. KxB KR–K1ch 26. K–B3 Q–R4ch! or 23. N–QN3 Q–N4ch 24. K–Q2 P–Q4, Black's attack is very strong.

22. . . . P–K4! 23. P–N5 PxN 24. NxP

24. PxB is no good due to 24. . . . RxB! 25. KxR QxPch.

24. . . . BxN, White resigned.

In the example that follows, White has to sacrifice three minor pieces to draw the Black King into the center of the board. But initially, the events took a rather curious course.

AMERICAN OPEN

Santa Monica, 1976

RUY LOPEZ

Shamkovich *Blohm*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 N–B3 4. O–O NxP

The ancient so-called "Berlin Defense."

5. R–K1

Modern practice more frequently features the following positional plan: 5. P–Q4 N–Q3 6. BxN QPxB 7. PxP N–B4 8. QxQ, with a slight advantage to White.

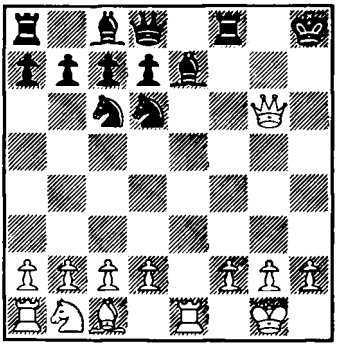
5. . . . N–Q3 6. NxP B–K2 7. Q–R5!?

Ljubojevic's experimental move first used with success against Calvo in 1973: 7. . . . NxN? 8. QxN NxB 9. QxNP! R–B1 10. P–QR4! N–Q3 11. N–B3 with attacking possibilities for White. Theoreticians recommended 7. . . . O–O, which is exactly what my opponent did. The time-tested 7. . . . B–Q3 is regarded as sounder.

7. . . . O–O 8. B–Q3 P–KN3!?

Of course, 8. . . . P–B4 is less explosive, but my opponent decided to challenge me: after White's sacrifice (this time, forced) of two minor pieces, White has an opportunity for perpetual check available to him but hardly more.

9. NxNP BPxN 10. BxP PxB 11. QxPch K–R1



This situation is peculiar because White has performed a series of "disruptive" sacrifices (aimed at preventing the opponent's castling) typical of the middlegame phase; however, the opening stage is not yet over since neither player has started to develop his Queenside pieces. If White is not content with perpetual check, his chances of success depend on how fast he can deploy the as-yet undeveloped forces.

12. P–QN3!

12. R–K3 is fruitless at that stage because of 12. . . . N–B4!

12. . . . B–B3

Obvious, though not the best reply: after 12. . . . N–B4! 13. B–N2ch B–B3 White would have to give up hope for a win and resign himself to a perpetual check: 14. R–K3! NxR 15. Q–R6ch, etc.

13. R–K3 B–N2

The only available defense to the threat of 14. R–R3ch.

14. B–N2?

An exchange "gift." After 14. R–R3ch K–N1 15. Q–R7ch K–B2 16. B–N2! White's attack is irresistible.

14. . . . R–B3!

A prudent response: to ensure his safety, Black is prepared to hand back part of his "surplus." Weaker is 14. . . . R–B2 due to 15. R–N3! Q–K2 16. R–R3ch K–N1 17. Q–R7ch and mate in two.

15. R–R3ch K–N1 16. Q–R7ch K–B1 17. BxR BxB?

Black simply had to play 17. . . . QxB!, fearless even of sacrificing his Queen: after 18. R–KB3 QxR 19. PxQ BxR an entirely muddy situation arises, whereas now White brings his Queenside pieces into play at lightning speed and obtains a devastating attack.

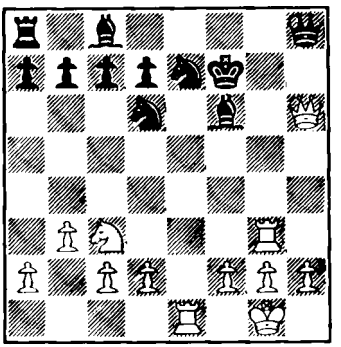
18. R–N3 N–K2 19. N–B3 Q–K1

The only possibility of galvanizing the Queen. The threat was 20. N–Q5, and 19. . . . N/3–B4 cannot save the day because of 20. N–Q5! BxR 21. NxN NxN 22. R–B3ch or 20. . . . NxR 21. NxB N–K7ch 22. K–B1 N–B3 23. Q–N6!

20. Q–R6ch K–B2 21. R–K1

The "impossible" has come to pass: all White pieces are in full combat readiness whereas Black has only a limited number of maneuverable pieces.

21. . . . Q–R1



Finally, after so many adventures, the game shows the familiar traits of a sacrifice of pursuit.

22. RxNch! KxR 23. N–Q5ch K–K3

On 23. . . . K–Q1 the elegant 24. R–N8ch!! would decide the outcome of the game, and on 23. . . . K–B2 there would follow 24. Q–N6ch K–K3 25. NxB.

24. NxPch K–K2 25. N–Q5ch

At this stage, even the prosaic 25. QxQ BxQ 26. NxR would be decisive.

25. . . . K–K3 26. N–B4ch! K–B4

Heroism perforce: 26. . . . K–B2 is bad due to 27. Q–N6ch K–B1 28. Q–Q3! with two threats, 29. N–N6 or 29. QxNch.

27. Q–N6ch KxN 28. P–Q4!

Early in the game this move would have packed less punch: now Black is surrounded by mating threats.

28. . . . BxP 29. Q–N5ch, Black resigned

29. . . . K–K5 would be met with 30. R–N4 mate.

So the standard "unit" of the sacrifice of pursuit is a minor piece. Rooks are sacrificed much less frequently for the obvious reason that the Rooks take almost no part in the early phase of the game. Thus, special circumstances warrant the sacrifice of a Rook.

Moreover, even at a later stage with most of the pieces active, a true sacrifice of such an important combat entity involves a higher degree of risk than does a minor piece. The timely return of "surplus" material yields substantial counterchances for the defending side. Hence a rule can be formulated: the greater the value of a true sacrifice the more dangerous and diverse should be the threats created thereby. The following game is a good illustration of this rule.

U.S.S.R. TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Moscow, 1964

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Savon *Krogius*

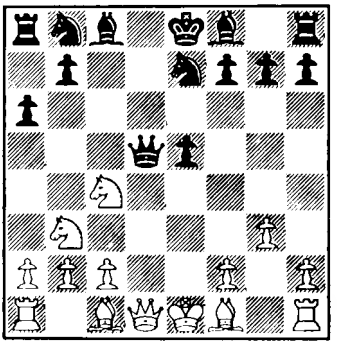
1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–K3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP P–QR3 5. N–Q2 N–K2 6. P–KN3 P–K4?

A poor move, weakening a complex of squares and opening marvelous prospects for the Knight at Q2 that could be exploited by 7. N–B4! N–N3 (7. . . . P–Q3? N–N5! or 7. . . . Q–B2 8. N–N5! or 7. . . . P–Q4 8. NxP PxP 9. B–QB4 plainly in White's favor) 8. N–N3 P–Q3 9. B–K3 with the irresistible threat of 10. N–N6. Apparently Grandmaster Krogius chose his strange move by a simple analogy: with the White N at QB3, the move is quite feasible. For the time being Savon preferred a calm reply.

7. N/4–N3 P–Q4

Going on with the erroneous plan of opening the center. Better is 7. . . . P–Q3, of course.

8. PxP QxP 9. N–B4!



A brilliant Rook sacrifice motivated, above all, by the exceptional mobility of the White pieces and a chance to draw Black's King into the thick of battle. Recovery of the Rook is not White's immediate goal, as we shall see later.

9. . . . QxR

After the exchange of Queens (9. . . . QxQch) Black still has a patently bad position.

10. N–Q6ch K–Q2 11. N–K4ch K–K1 12. N–Q6ch K–Q2 13. NxBPch K–K1

The Black Rook can be safely captured only after 13. . . . Q–Q4: 14. NxR QxQch 15. KxQ K–K1 16. B–QB4, and the White N gets out of the corner safely.

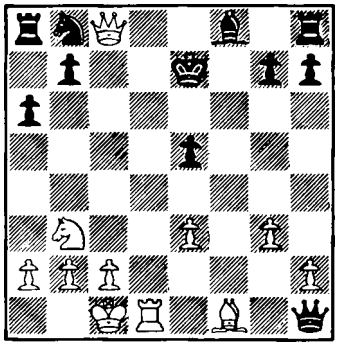
14. N–Q6ch

If 14. NxR? Q–K5ch 15. B–K3 N–Q4! Black would immediately take to the counteroffensive. Time is not ripe yet for a prosaic recovery of the material. White has to prove the soundness of his sacrifice!

14. . . . K–Q2 15. B–K3!

At last Savon finds the best plan: an all-out attack. White imperturbably continues to develop his pieces, bearing in mind that the reply 15. . . . Q–Q4 is unsound in view of 16. Q–N4ch! KxN 17. Q–N4ch K–B2 18. Q–N6ch K–Q2 19. R–Q1, etc.

15. . . . N–Q4 16. Q–N4ch KxN 17. QxB NxB 18. PxN K–K2 19. O–O–O



White's plan has been fulfilled: all his pieces take part in the attack, and the Black King stands worse than ever. Nevertheless, Black is a Rook up, and a forced win is still nowhere in sight. So

in the course of further attack White must show the utmost circumspection since Black's Bishop and Knight await a favorable tactical situation to enter the game, even if at the expense of a countersacrifice.

19. . . . Q–B3 20. Q–Q8ch K–B2 21. N–R5!

Not giving the opponent a moment's respite. Weaker is 21. B–R3 because of 21. . . . P–KN3 22. R–B1ch K–N2 and the KB is freed.

21. . . . Q–B4 22. B–B4ch K–N3 23. B–Q3ch P–K5!

Otherwise after 23. . . . K–B2 24. R–B1ch Black would be mated.

24. BxPch K–R3 25. BxNP!

Black's few remaining illusions are dissipated (25. R–Q4? N–B3!). Unable to add further fuel to the attack, White recovers material.

25. . . . R–R2 26. QxN QxPch 27. K–N1 P–N3 28. Q–Q8 Q–K4 29. Q–R4ch, and Black resigned soon afterwards.

The annals of chess present a few unique examples of a true sacrifice of pursuit involving the Queen, the strongest combat unit of all. Naturally, sacrifices of this kind occur extremely rarely since parting with the Queen without material compensation and a clear path to a win is enormously risky. Here is one of the most remarkable instances of such a sacrifice.

Sochi, 1958

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE

Polugaevsky — *Nezhmetdinov*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–Q3 3. N–QB3 P–K4 4. P–K4

White is willing to lose a tempo to seize the central squares. The usual move is 4. N–KB3.

4. . . . PxP 5. QxP N–B3 6. Q–Q2 P–KN3 7. P–QN3 B–N2 8. B–N2 O–O 9. B–Q3 N–KN5 10. KN–K2

10. N–B3, forestalling the lunge 10. . . . Q–R5!, is stronger.

10. . . . Q–R5!

After his energetic opening, Black obtains excellent play.

11. N–N3 N/N–K4 12. O–O

12. B–B2 can be parried, according to Nezhmetdinov, by 12. . . . N–Q5! 13. B–Q1 P–QB4 14. N–Q5 B–R3 15. P–B4 BxP!, and 12. B–K2 by 12. . . . B–R3 13. Q–Q1 P–B4 14. PxP PxP 15. N–Q5 P–B5 16. N–K4 B–B4 17. B–KB3 QR–K1 with a decisive attack.

12. . . . P–B4!

An attempt to undermine the center that is typical of such positions. On the tempting 12. . . . N–KN5 the winner devised a remarkable variation: 13. P–KR3 NxP 14. QxN! B–Q5 15. QxB!! NxQ 16. N–Q5, giving White a devastating attack at the price of his Queen sacrificed for merely one piece! This variation echoes our subject and emphasizes once again that one cannot be too mindful of the opponent's plans.

13. P–B3

On 13. P–B4 a good move is . . . N–KN5.

13. . . . B–R3 14. Q–Q1 P–B5 15. N/N–K2 P–KN4

Black now has evolved a clear-cut plan of Kingside attack.

16. N–Q5 P–N5

An awful threat is real: 17. . . . P–N6 18. P–KR3 BxP! Since 17. PxP BxP is clearly to Black's advantage, Polugaevsky casts prudence to the winds.

17. P–N3!? PxNP 18. RPxP Q–R6 19. P–B4

White has a highly ingenious scheme: the natural 19. . . . N–B6ch will be followed by 20. K–B2 Q–R7ch 21. K–K3!, and with his King sitting pretty on the third rank, White goes on a decisive counteroffensive (the threat of 22. R–R1).

19. . . . B–K3!

By connecting his Rooks, Black intends to eliminate the strong

N at Q5 by exchange. 20. PxN is of course very bad due to . . . BxN with the threat . . . B–K6ch.

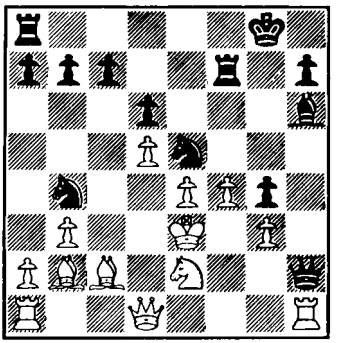
20. B–B2 R–B2 21. K–B2!?

Feeling that the castled position is about to fall to pieces, the White King hurries to escape from his "burning house."

21. . . . Q–R7ch 22. K–K3 BxN! 23. BPxB

If 23. KPxB, then 23. . . . R–K1!

23. . . . N–N5 24. R–R1



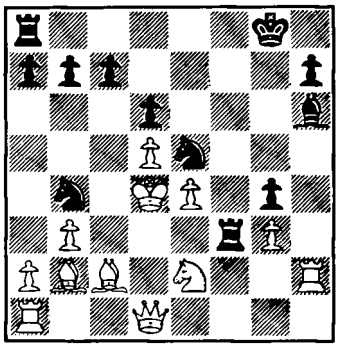
White has repulsed the immediate threats and seems on the verge of a counterattack: on 24. . . . Q–N7 there follows the simple 25. RxB. But the opponent springs a most unpleasant surprise that had been prepared in advance.

24. . . . RxP!!

The main variations of this stunningly beautiful combinational strike are: 25. NxR NxBch; 25. PxR BxPch! 26. NxB (26. K–Q4 Q–B7ch) NxBch; and 25. BxN R–B6ch 26. K–Q4 Q–B7ch. So Black cannot capture the Rook. But what about the Queen? There is no possibility of a forced mate, though the White King immediately finds himself in the ground zero of the battle. A very interesting comment by Nezhmetdinov: "Obviously I could not calculate all probabilities at the boardside. The combination was intuitive and this is precisely why I found it so difficult to make a plunge." Strictly speaking, what we see is an acutely dynamic

sacrifice brimming with rich combinational potentialities. And yet, it is a true sacrifice of a Queen rather than a combination, since the would-be position was evaluated largely intuitively.

25. RxQ R–B6ch 26. K–Q4



A fantastic position! But one that was closely studied by Black in preliminary calculations. The White King is in a mating net; nonetheless, "though the fish is thrashing in the net it is a hard job to pull it out of the water": neither 26. . . . B–K6ch nor 26. . . . P–B4ch 27. PxP e.p. PxP 28. B–Q3! leads to a clear win for Black, although in the latter variation Black easily recovers the Queen. In the absence of stunning blows that can end the game at a stroke, "quiet" moves are called for.

26. . . . B–N2!!

The threat is now, above all, 27. . . . P–N4! and 28. . . . N/4–B3 mate. White manages to parry this thrust in the only way possible but opens the gate to another threat.

27. P–R4 P–B4ch 28. PxP e.p. PxP 29. B–Q3 N/4xBch 30. K–B4 P–Q4ch!

Of course, 30. . . . NxBch is sufficient to win, but the next move also leads to mate.

31. PxP PxPch 32. K–N5 R–N1ch

The previously dormant Rook deals the White King a deadly blow.

33. K–R5 N–B3ch, White resigned.

The Gallant King

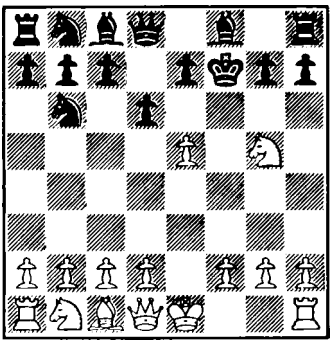
Like any true sacrifice, the sacrifice of pursuit clearly does not guarantee absolutely certain success even if carried out "by the book." What looks like a deadly attack can turn out to have clay feet, the pursued King happily returning to his own camp without any losses to speak of.

Rotterdam, 1927

ALEKHINE DEFENSE

Nordijk *Landau*

1. P–K4 N–KB3 2. P–K5 N–Q4 3. N–KB3 P–Q3 4. B–B4 N–N3 5. BxPch? KxB 6. N–N5ch



6. . . . K–N3?

Now the sacrifice of a piece is vindicated. There followed **7. Q–B3! KxN** (or 7. . . . Q–K1 8. P–K6!) **8. Q–B7! P–N3 9. P–Q4ch K–R4 10. Q–B4 P–KR3 11. P–KR3 P–N4 12. Q–B7ch** and mate next move. Some authors cite this miniature without criticizing White, and yet Black can easily refute the frivolous attack: 6. . . . K–N1! 7. Q–B3 Q–K1 8. P–K6 P–N3! 9. P–Q4 N–B3 10. P–B3 N–Q1.

There are paradoxical cases of the King's safe return from "the center of hell."

Moscow, 1970

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

Karpov — *A. Zaitsev*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–QB3 PxP 4. NxP N–Q2 5. N–KB3 KN–B3 6. NxNch NxN 7. N–K5 B–B4

The Black Bishop feels unsafe here. Better is 7. . . . B–K3.

8. P–QB3 P–K3 9. P–KN4! B–N3 10. P–KR4 B–Q3 11. Q–K2!

White has a clear advantage. The threat is 12. P–R5, and an exchange of Knights is unsatisfactory.

11. . . . P–B4 12. P–R5

A hasty move. Today, World Champion Anatoly Karpov would doubtless play simply 12. B–N2!, consolidating his advantage. Now Black grasps the initiative.

12. . . . B–K5 13. P–B3 PxP!

An important intermediate move: 13. . . . B–Q4 is ineffective due to 14. P–QB4.

14. Q–N5ch N–Q2!

A very powerful move: 15. NxN is answered with . . . B–B3!, and 15. QxNch with . . . QxQ 16. NxQ BxP! with an obvious gain.

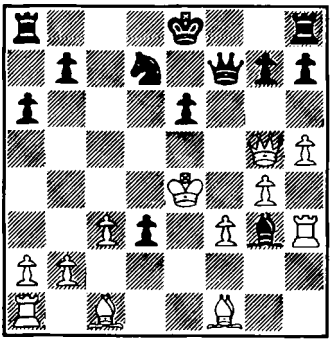
15. NxP!?

White aims at complicating the game since 15. PxB BxN is alarming. Nevertheless, White's position has been undermined and Black loses no time in pouncing.

15. . . . B–N6ch 16. K–K2 P–Q6ch! 17. K–K3

The White King sets off on a perilous journey, though not entirely of his own accord: after 17. K–Q2 KxN 18. PxB N–K4! with the threat of 19. . . . Q–N4ch White's circumstances are even less bright.

17. . . . Q–B3 18. KxB!? QxN 19. R–R3 P–QR3 20. Q–N5



A position unique in modern-day chess: the White King is stationed right in the middle of the board with almost all pieces still in the game and with Black enjoying full material equality. But it is far from easy to attack the White King. White intends to protect his pawn at KB3 and to pull the King back to a safe place, capturing the opponent's pawn on Q6 on the go. Can Black prevent this?

20. . . . P–R3?

A tempting (21. Q–N6? N–B4ch 22. K–K3 B–B5ch, capturing a piece) but poor move, surrendering the advantage. Black ought to play 20. . . . P–K4!, sacrificing a Bishop and creating new threats 21. . . . Q–QB5ch and 21. . . . N–B4ch. On 21. RxB there would follow . . . N–B4ch 22. K–K3 O–O! 23. R–R3 (23. P–N4 P–R3! or 23. K–Q2 N–K5ch!) 23. . . . QR–Q1 with an extremely strong attack, and 21. KxP is bad due to . . . QxPch 22. B–K3 N–B4ch 23. K–B2 Q–K5ch 24. K–B1 N–K3!

Having secured such a promising position without the slightest material expenditure, Black had to sacrifice if his attack was to assume a concrete nature—the logic of positions of this kind. Now White dexterously avoids danger and comes off unscathed.

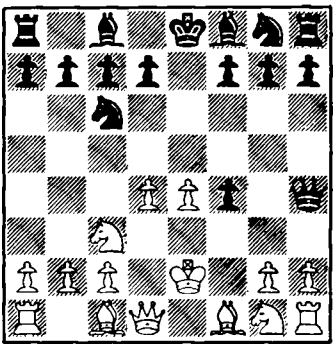
21. Q–K3!

Retaining control of the QB5-square. The White King is in front of all his guards, but now nothing can prevent him from slipping back home. For instance, 21. . . . N–K4 22. RxB O–O 23. Q–Q4, etc.

21. . . . P–K4 22. KxP B–B5 23. Q–N1! O–O–O 24. K–B2, winning.

An opening system exists in which the White King deliberately marches toward the center of the board: the Steinitz Gambit:

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–QB3 N–QB3 3. P–B4 PxP 4. P–Q4!? Q–R5ch 5. K–K2



Using this opening, the first world champion Wilhelm Steinitz regularly beat his opponents on the basis of his maxim: "The King is fully capable of defending himself."

Here is another Steinitz game:

Baden-Baden, 1870

Steinitz *Paulsen*

5. . . . P–Q3 6. N–B3 B–N5 7. BxP O–O–O 8. K–K3 Q–R4 9. B–K2 Q–R4? 10. P–QR3 BxN 11. KxB!

Weaker is 11. BxB because of . . . P–KN4 12. B–N3 B–N2.

11. . . . Q–R4ch 12. K–K3 Q–R5 13. P–QN4 P–KN4 14. B–N3 Q–R3 15. P–N5

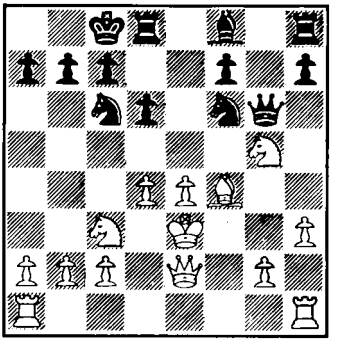
Capitalizing on the opponent's anarchic playing, White gradually sets the stage for a dangerous counterattack on the Queenside.

15. . . . QN–K2 16. R–KB1 N–KB3 17. K–B2 N–N3 18. K–N1!

Having castled artificially, White has a winning position. Modern-day theoreticians, however, view Steinitz's eccentric plan with scepticism, insisting that the White King's risky journey will inevitably prove detrimental if Black plays sufficiently vigorously.

and steadfastly. And that was exactly the case in Barle–Portisch, Ljubljana–Portoroz 1975, where, instead of 9. . . . Q–R4?, Black played

9. . . . P–KN4! 10. NxP N–B3 11. P–KR3 BxB 12. QxB Q–N3



By sacrificing a pawn, Black opened attack avenues.

13. P–Q5

Black has a good position after 13. N–B3 N–KR4, too.

13. . . . N–K4 14. N–B3 B–R3 15. BxB QxBch 16. K–B2 KR–N1 17. KR–KN1 K–N1 18. Q–Q2 Q–N3 19. Q–B4 N–R4!

Black sacrifices another pawn, getting an irresistible attack in return.

20. NxN PxN 21. QxKP QR–K1 22. Q–Q4 N–N6 23. QR–K1 N–B4! 24. Q–Q3 Q–N3ch! 25. K–K2 R–N6 26. Q–B4 Q–K6ch 27. K–Q1 QxR!, White resigned.

The Psychology of the Sacrifice

The following game (taken from Spielmann's book) is more interesting still, containing all the dramatic paraphernalia of a sacrifice of pursuit, a far from obvious piece sacrifice, a wandering King, steadfast defense, and fresh sacrifices. A detailed analysis of the following game will, it is hoped, give an insight into the psychology of sacrifice, at least in some aspects.

Vienna, 1933

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Spielmann — *S. Rubinstein*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 P–Q4 4. N–B3 B–K2 5. B–N5 O–O 6. P–K3 P–QN3

Nowadays this move is preceded by 6. . . . P–KR3 and 7. B–R4.

7. B–Q3 B–N2 8. BxN BxB 9. PxP PxP 10. P–KR4

An undisguised threat to sacrifice the Bishop on KR7.

10. . . . P–B4

Spielmann's interesting remarks on this move boil down to the following: 10. . . . P–B4 seems to be objectively and analytically correct, but the practical dangers associated with it are too great. Hence, preference should have been given to the more circumspect 10. . . . R–K1.

"For technical, strategic, and even psychological reasons defense is far more difficult to manage than attack," Spielmann wrote. "I therefore believe that a sacrifice should be assessed primarily from the viewpoint of attending dangers, as well as in terms of correctness." Quite true. As often as not it is easier to attack from many sides than to carry on defensive operations, even if the defense should theoretically be successful. Those critics who pass a severe judgment on the so-called "creative sacrifices" should never lose sight of this peculiarity of double-edged positions. Indeed, in modern practice, psychological motivation frequently underlies objective considerations. Among the former, we could note the desire to infuse the game with combinational motives unpalatable to the opponent, or to complicate an unpromising position. A further psychological reason is the specific traits of the opponent's character, such as a dislike for unorthodox positions or a poor ability to manage endgame, and so on.

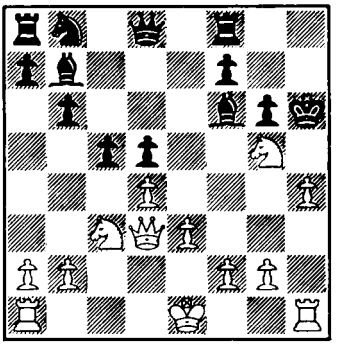
And yet, Spielmann's formula should be qualified somewhat. Today, defensive technique is much more refined than in Spielmann's time, and only a very soundly motivated sacrifice may bring success. Modern practice shows numerous examples of an

outwardly vicious but not entirely correct attack collapsing in the face of steadfast defense. The art of defense was much less developed in Spielmann's days, let alone still earlier.

11. BxPch!? KxB 12. N–N5ch K–R3 13. Q–Q3

13. Q–B2 is better, as we shall see later.

13. . . . P–N3



By sacrificing a Bishop White forced the Black King out to the third rank. Certainly quite an achievement, but what next? The choices are many and hence difficult. White can try: (*a*) to step up the pressure without resorting to new sacrifices; (*b*) to recover the material, retaining some of the positional advantage; and (*c*) to offer fresh sacrifices to the god of attack. Spielmann preferred the last, and the most risky, approach: he sacrificed yet another piece.

14. P–R5!?

Now Black's King is deprived of the pawn shield and is firmly stuck on the "front lines," whereas the small but active White army becomes still more formidable.

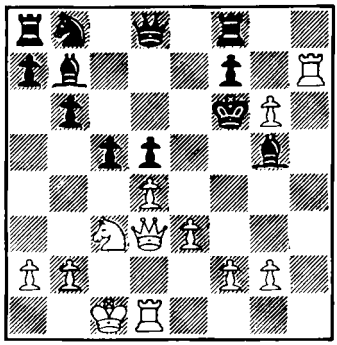
14. . . . BxN

Black cannot but accept the sacrifice, since after 14. . . . K–N2 15. PxP R–R1 16. NxBP RxRch 17. K–Q2 RxR 18. NxQ BxN 19. Q–B5 B–B3 20. NxP White wins. On 14. . . . KxN Spielmann gives the variation 15. P–B4ch K–R3 16. PxPch K–N2 17. R–R7ch K–N1

18. O–O–O "followed by QR–R1, and the White attack wins the game handily."

This categorical conclusion would have probably remained unchallenged to this day if it were not for the inquisitive and courageous Boris Spassky, who played the entire variation as far as the 18th move, O–O–O (except that White played 13. Q–B2), against Teschner at an international tournament at Riga in 1959. There followed 18. . . . B–N2 19. QR–R1 Q–B3 and White's attack came to a dead end. On the enticing 20. R/1–R6 there could follow 20. . . . N–Q2 21. PxPch QxP 22. RxBch QxR 23. R–N6 N–B3, giving Black more than adequate compensation for the Queen. White chose the strongest continuation of the attack: 20. PxPch RxP (but not 20. . . . QxP? due to 21. R/1–R5!, threatening 22. R–N5) 21. P–KN4! PxQP (in Spassky's opinion, 21. . . . N–Q2 is stronger) 22. P–N5 Q–B4 (in case of 22. . . . Q–K2 23. Q–N6! Spielmann's judgment would have to be acknowledged as correct) 23. RxBch (another sacrifice, this time forced) 23. . . . KxR 24. Q–R2 R–B1 25. P–N6 QxP 26. R–N1, and now Black should have captured the Knight with 26. . . . PxN, whereupon 27. P–B5! RxP 28. RxQch KxR 29. Q–N3ch and White could count at most on a draw, abandoning all hope of a win. Some "handy win," indeed! Spielmann clearly underrated Black's counterattacking potential. Spassky's game continued 26. . . . N–Q2 27. RxQch KxR 28. N–N5 with great complications. Spassky finally managed to win, though not without his opponent's help.

15. PxPch K–N2 16. R–R7ch K–B3 17. O–O–O!



Yet another "knightly" gesture: White would not recover the piece (17. P–B4). The reason for the noble behavior is, as Spielmann points out, that "after 17. P–B4 B–R5ch 18. RxB R–R1 Black would take over the KR-file and it is extremely doubtful whether White's attack, considerably weakened as it was by the exchange of the invading Rook, was still worth sacrificing even one piece." Here we see how curious are the whims of the chess game when it enters the dramatic sphere of combat between "matter" and "force"! Incidentally, with the White Queen stationed on QB2, the move 17. P–B4 would have been absolutely legitimate: on 17. . . . B–R5ch 18. RxB R–R1 White has a strong reply 19. Q–B2! and the attack undeniably warrants sacrifices. In sharp contests of this kind, an error of the attacker is rarely allowed to go unpunished, though this is even more true for the defender. Commenting on White's latter move, however, Spielmann remarks optimistically that the White attack was very strong and "he could sit back and relax."

17. . . . P–B5?

Only now, after Black's mistake, does White's attack become irresistible. Very strong is 17. . . . B–QR3! 18. Q–B2 N–B3 with excellent counterchances for Black, for instance, 19. QPxP N–N5 20. Q–N1 NPxP 21. P–B4 R–B1 22. PxBch K–K3, threatening QxNP. Black's only chance was to counterattack! Obviously, Spielmann's opponent, the namesake of the famous Akiba Rubinstein, failed to realize this. The closing attack is very instructive and beautiful.

18. Q–K2 K–K2 19. P–B4 B–KB3 20. P–K4!

A decisive breakthrough, sweeping away the last line of defense.

20. . . . PxKP 21. NxP K–Q2 22. P–Q5! N–R3 23. P–N7! R–KN1 24. R–R6!

Black cannot avoid material losses. Since 24. . . . B–K2 does not work due to 25. P–Q6!, Black seeks salvation in the sacrifice of his Queen.

24. . . . BxNP 25. R–Q6ch K–B2 26. QxPch!

An important intermediate check, splitting the Black Rooks.

26. . . . K–N1 27. RxQch RxR 28. K–N1 N–B2 29. P–Q6 N–K3 30. P–B5, and Black soon resigned.

The examples cited above clearly suggest that a true sacrifice of pursuit is no all-prize lottery. In most cases the sacrificing side must play with exceptional precision. At the end of the chapter on the sacrifice of pursuit, Spielmann writes:

> In Anderssen's time sacrifices of pursuit were a common thing. Numerous games dating back to that period demonstrate a chase after the King across the entire board and a mate often on the opposite side from where the King started. Not infrequently, such sacrifices were made as early as the opening. Nowadays, with the exceptionally high level of chess technique, sacrifices of pursuit have become a rarity. True, the reason for this is not so much the modern players' unlimited concern for their King's safety, as the fear struck in their hearts by the latest principles of chess strategy, that are totally misunderstood at that. As a result, the trust in sacrifice-based attacks is deteriorating as the trust in theory grows, and the specter of draw-induced death has been hovering over tournaments.

This grim pronouncement was made in 1935, the peak of blossoming of Alekhine's genius marked by fantastic combinations and the subtlest of sacrifices! Still, the general picture apparently gave Spielmann—the Knight of the Attack—at least some grounds for pessimism: similar sad prophesies of the death of chess through draws were made by Capablanca and Lasker.

What can be said then of the art of chess in our day with improved technique and increased concern for the King's safety? Has the drawish death finally caught up with the thousand-year-old game? Absolutely not. Bold sacrifices, subtle combinational plans, brilliant attacks, all sparkle in the creations of modern masters. This "rejuvenation" of chess is accounted for by the trend toward a sharp and intensive struggle from the very first moves,

the increased significance of the counterattack, and a profound evolution in the approach to the part played by chess "matter." Fortunately, the predictions of Lasker, Capablanca, and Spielmann have not materialized.

CHAPTER VI

The Developing Sacrifice

If the opponent violates the principle of economy of time, the most natural response is a developing sacrifice. Its goal is plain: to achieve a tangible edge in the development of the pieces. Of course, practically all sound sacrifices in the opening, including the sacrifices of pursuit examined above, are directly or indirectly associated with the paramount opening principle, that of development. Positional advantage, the initiative, and the attack—all of this comes as a reward for better development. However, we are going to designate as developing sacrifices only those true sacrifices whose immediate and obvious aim is to gain a time advantage.

Let us turn to Morphy's legacy once more.

New York, 1857

KING'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Schulten — *Morphy*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. P–KB4 P–Q4

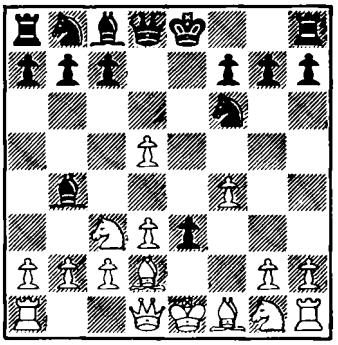
Falkbeer's Countergambit, the most vigorous reply to King's Gambit.

3. PxQP P–K5 4. N–QB3

Much later it was proved that 4. P–Q3 N–KB3 5. N–Q2!, avoiding the unpleasant pin on the N, is stronger.

4. . . . N–KB3 5. P–Q3 B–QN5 6. B–Q2 P–K6!

An ingenious and daring developing sacrifice, killing two birds with one stone: White's development is hindered, and the K-file is opened for a direct attack on the White King.



7. BxP O–O 8. B–Q2

Black has clearly obtained more than adequate compensation for the sacrificed central pawn: two tempos and an open file.

8. . . . BxN!

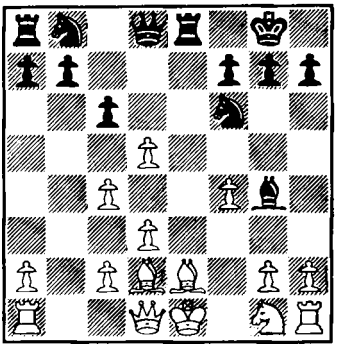
It stands to reason to get rid of the active Knight.

9. PxB R–K1ch 10. B–K2 B–N5!

Essentially one more developing sacrifice. Refusing to lose valuable time by capturing the QP (after 10. . . . NxP 11. N–B3 White just manages to complete his development), Black continues to press the opponent. Now White's KN will find it far from simple to enter the game.

11. P–B4 P–B3!

Undermining the center, Black intends to force the development of his Queenside pieces.



12. PxP?

Instead of this exchange, furthering the speedy engagement of all of his opponent's pieces into the attack, White should have immediately returned one of his extra pawns with 12. P–KR3! Then, if 12. . . . BxB 13. NxB PxP 14. PxP NxP 15. O–O, White would conceivably have completed his protracted development and even emerged a pawn up although, however, Black would still have retained a measure of the initiative.

12. . . . NxP 13. K–B1 RxB!

A familiar motif.

14. NxR N–Q5 15. Q–N1 BxNch 16. K–B2 N–N5ch 17. K–N1 N–B6ch! 18. PxN Q–Q5ch 19. K–N2 Q–B7ch 20. K–R3 QxBPch 21. K–R4 N–K6 22. R–N1 N–B4ch 23. K–N5 Q–R4 mate.

In this game, the advantage in development steadily increased through thematic sacrifices, the leitmotif of all of Black's strategy.

One of the Seven "Deadly Sins"

Among the more widespread "sins" in chess, Tartakower included greed, the pig-headed striving for material gain. Such cases very often set the stage for a developing sacrifice whereby the opponent gains an edge in development at the price of some material. Here is an interesting case in point.

St. Petersburg, 1914

FRENCH DEFENSE

Nimzovich *Alapin*

1. P–K4 P–K3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. PxP

According to modern theory, 4. B–KN5 or 4. P–K5 is stronger.

4. . . . NxP 5. N–B3 P–QB4 6. NxN QxN

With Black pieces totally undeveloped, this lunge by the Queen into the center is not in itself fraught with danger for Black provided he subsequently plays with caution. However, this was not a tournament game but one of skittles. . . .

7. B–K3 PxP?

This activates White's pieces. Better is 7. . . . N–Q2! 8. P–B4 Q–Q3.

8. NxP P–QR3 9. B–K2! QxNP?

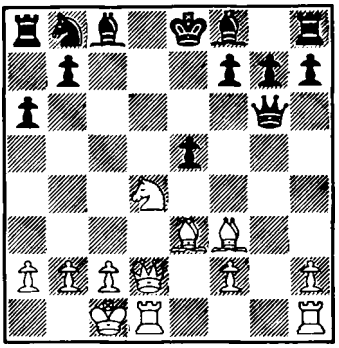
Not only does Black lose several tempos, but he also opens the KN-file.

10. B–B3 Q–N3 11. Q–Q2 P–K4

Of course, 11. . . . B–K2 is more dependable, though after 12. O–O–O Black cannot castle: 12. . . . O–O 13. KR–N1 Q–KB3 14. B–N5.

White's large margin of advantage in development justifies the following Knight sacrifice:

12. O–O–O!



12. . . . PxN

Stronger is 12. . . . B–K2, presenting White with more serious problems. There could follow 13. KR–N1 Q–KB3 (13. . . . Q–Q3 14. Q–B3!) 14. B–N5 Q–Q3 15. BxB QxB 16. BxNP!! QxB 17. N–B5 with a rout.

13. BxP N–B3 14. B–B6!!

An effective finishing combination based on pin motifs.

14. . . . QxB 15. KR–K1ch B–K2 16. BxNch K–B1 17. Q–Q8ch BxQ 18. R–K8 mate.

The following interesting game is in the same vein. The young Keres succeeded in carrying it through in a single "key," as the English master pounced on every pawn and piece his opponent offered.

Warsaw, 1935

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Keres *Winter*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–KB3 3. P–K5 N–Q4 4. N–B3 P–K3 5. NxN PxN 6. P–Q4 P–Q3

Today's theory considers it stronger to play 6. . . . N–B3 7. PxP BxP 8. QxP Q–N3 with counterplay.

7. B–KN5! Q–R4ch

But not 7. . . . B–K2 8. BxB QxB 9. PxBP, winning a pawn. It is interesting to note that the energetic 7. B–KN5, which is now regarded as the strongest, occurred to Keres in the game (instead of the "theoretical" 7. B–N5ch).

8. P–B3 PxQP

The onset of pawn "gobbling" on an unprecedented scale. True, Black faced difficulties in developing (hindered as he was by the Bishop on KN5), but just the same he ought to have tried. Correct is 8. . . . N–B3.

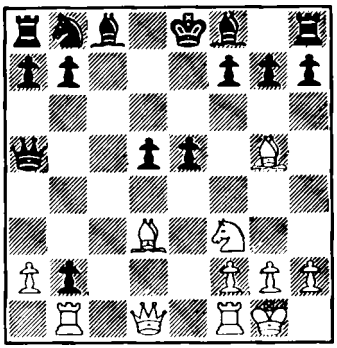
9. B–Q3!

The first of a series of developing sacrifices. Weaker, of course, is 9. QxP due to 9. . . . N–B3, etc.

9. . . . PxBP 10. O–O PxNP?

Black has gotten carried away. Here, too, 10. . . . N–B3 is better although after 11. R–K1 B–K3 12. NPxP White has adequate compensation for the pawn (pointed out by Keres).

11. R–N1 PxP?



And this move ruins Black's game completely. However, 11. . . . N–B3 12. R–K1 B–K3 also gives White, as Keres indicated, a very strong attack.

12. NxP B–Q3 13. NxP!

Shattering the Black King's position.

13. . . . KxN 14. Q–R5ch P–N3 15. BxPch! PxB 16. QxR B–KB4 17. KR–K1 B–K5 18. RxB! PxR 19. Q–B6ch, Black resigned.

The next game followed a similar pattern, although Black's willingness to accept all the pawn sacrifices did not seem all that naive. But here, too, "spirit" triumphed over "matter."

Hastings, 1973/74

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Basman *Stean*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. B–K2 N–QB3 4. P–B3 N–B3 5. P–Q4 PxP 6. PxP NxKP!?

White used a singular opening system, but 6. . . . P–Q4! would give Black good chances. Black decided to accept the challenge, however, for the perfectly good reason that even in open games theoreticians recommend eliminating the opponent's central pawns (for example, 1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 N–B3 4. P–Q4 PxP 5. O–O NxP!), and in the Sicilian Defense it is "what the doctor ordered." But is it?

7. P–Q5 Q–R4ch

It is precisely the necessity of this lunge (the retreat of the QN would be followed by 8. Q–R4ch and further QxN), opening the QN-file, and the poor development that call Black's 6th move into question.

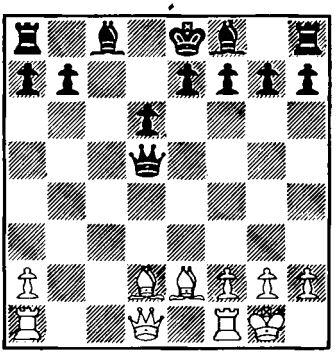
8. N–B3 NxN 9. NPxN N–K4?

One more strategic mistake: Black had no business exchanging this piece essential to his defense. Correct is 9. . . . N–N1, making obstinate defense a real possibility.

10. NxN! QxPch?!

Once you embark on a dangerous path, it is difficult to halt in midstride. However, White's pressure is considerable even after 10. . . . PxN 11. Q–N3 P–QR3 12. B–R3!

11. B–Q2 QxN 12. O–O QxP



The least that can be said of this move is that it is consistent. Black has amassed a fortune—three(!) extra pawns—and, in addition, the exchange of Knights has gone a long way toward simplifying the position. Yet in all likelihood, Black is no longer able to parry the blows of the opponent whose advantage in development has clearly passed the "critical mark."

13. R–N1 P–K3

Let us try other ways: 13. . . . P–KN3 14. B–QN5ch B–Q2 15. BxBch KxB 16. Q–R4ch K–Q1 17. RxP!! QxR 18. B–R5ch; 13. . . . P–QR3 14. B–KB3 Q–KB4 15. RxP! BxR 16. BxB R–Q1 17. Q–R4ch R–Q2 18. R–B1, etc. On 13. . . . P–K4 a possible answer is 14. B–KB3 Q–K3 15. BxP BxB 16. RxB B–K2 17. Q–R4ch K–B1 18. R–B1 with decisive threats.

14. B–N5ch B–Q2 15. BxBch KxB 16. Q–R4ch K–Q1 17. R–N5!

A decisive maneuver.

17. . . . Q–B3

17. . . . QxB 18. RxP and an imminent mate.

18. R–B1 Q–R3 19. R–QR5 Q–Q6 20. B–K3?

A slip. A straight path to victory is 20. B–N5ch P–B3 21. RxP RxR (21. . . . R–B1 22. RxP!) 22. QxR PxB 23. QxP.

20. . . . P–Q4? (20. . . . R–B1!) **21. RxP RxR 22. QxR B–R6 23. Q–N8ch K–K2 24. B–N5ch P–B3 25. QxPch K–Q3 26. Q–B7 mate.**

A Knightly Gesture

One of the most elegant techniques of the developing sacrifice consists in castling imperturably at the instant when the opponent is prepared for a different response, say the capture of a pawn or piece. The old masters' games abounded in this motif: the gambits and sharp openings of the past century nourished this "gallant" knightly gesture.

Warsaw, 1844

ITALIAN GAME

Hoffman *Petroff*

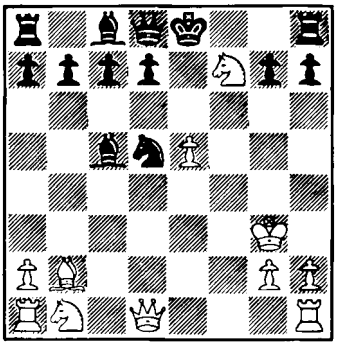
1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 B–B4 4. P–B3 N–B3 5. P–Q4 PxP 6. P–K5 N–K5

The Russian master soon afterwards came to the conclusion that 6. . . . P–Q4 was stronger. Modern theory concurs.

7. B–Q5 NxKBP!? 8. KxN PxPch 9. K–N3 PxP 10. BxP N–K2 11. N–N5?

A faulty plan brilliantly refuted by Black. Correct is 11. N–B3.

11. . . . NxB 12. NxBP



12. . . . O–O!!

Easily the most unexpected and paradoxical castling in the history of chess! Instead of the anticipated 12. . . . KxN a Queen sacrifice of unusual beauty and boldness follows.

13. NxQ B–B7ch 14. K–R3 P–Q3ch 15. P–K6 N–B5ch 16. K–N4 NxKP (there is no escape from mate) **17. NxN BxNch 18. K–N5 R–B4ch 19. K–N4 P–R4ch 20. K–R3 R–B6 mate.**

It goes without saying that no such examples could be found in today's serious practice. Nevertheless, a developing sacrifice of a pawn by means of castling is not a rarity. Most curiously, each "developing castling" almost invariably comes as a total surprise to the opponent.

Leningrad, 1960

SLAV DEFENSE

Shamkovich *Gufeld*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–QB3 3. N–KB3 N–B3 4. N–B3 P–K3 5. P–K3 QN–Q2 6. B–Q3 PxP 7. BxP P–QN4 8. B–Q3 P–N5

Black deviates from the main continuation of the Meran Variation: 8. . . . P–QR3 9. P–K4 P–B4.

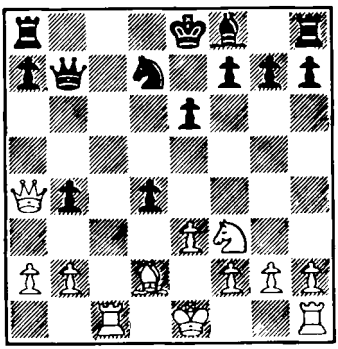
9. N–K4 NxN?

Stronger is 9. . . . B–N2 or 9. . . . B–K2 and subsequently P–QB4. But Black intends to execute the orthodox P–QB4 at a later stage in the game.

10. BxN B–N2 11. Q–R4 Q–B2

Better is 11. . . . Q–N3 12. B–Q2 N–B3.

12. B–Q2 P–QB4 13. BxB QxB 14. R–QB1 PxP



Black's calculations were based entirely on the "natural" reply 15. PxP, which after 15. . . . B–Q3 16. R–B6 Q–N1 would give him adequate play (and if 15. NxQP QxNP).

15. O–O!

Disrupting Black's strategy. White is in no hurry to capture the pawn on Q4 since 15. . . . PxP 16. BxP gives him a decisive attack with the threats of KR–Q1 and N–K5.

15. . . . B–K2 16. NxP!

Now is the time to capture the pawn with the Knight.

16. . . . O–O 17. N–B6 B–B3 18. QxNP.

The extra pawn and the better position decided the fate of the game.

In the following game, White had to "drain the bitter cup" after his opponent's unexpected stroke.

Buenos Aires, 1960

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE

Uhlmann *Taimanov*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 B–N5 4. P–K3 N–B3 5. KN–K2 P–Q4 6. P–QR3 B–B1!?

A singular system of development originated by Taimanov: having accomplished his mission on QN5, the Black KB intends to fianchetto! Wouldn't this eccentric plan retard Black's development? Of course such a danger does exist, but White also elected a very slow process of mobilization.

7. PxP PxP 8. N–B4 P–KN3 9. Q–N3 N–K2 10. P–K4

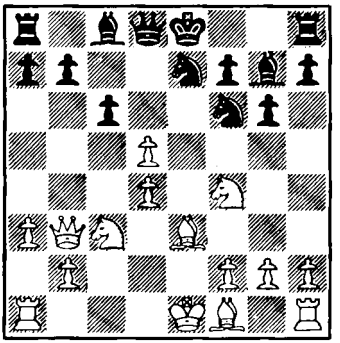
White naturally wants to open up the game while the opponent is busy accomplishing his curious regrouping. But how will White proceed if Black is stubborn?

10. . . . P–B3! 11. B–K3

Nothing can be achieved by calm development and pressure on the QP (incidentally, 11. PxP would be followed by 11. . . . B–

N2!). Black's plan can be refuted with 11. P–K5 N/3–N1 12. B–Q3 N–R3 13. KN–K2! N/3–B4 14. B–N5, exploiting the weakness of the KB3-square and the insecure position of the Black KN (14. . . . B–N2? 15. P–N4).

11. . . . B–N2 12. PxP



12. . . . O–O!

By sacrificing a pawn Black takes a big stride in development. White accepts the challenge since in case of 13. B–K2 (or 13. B–Q3) 13. . . . PxP he emerges with markedly worse play.

13. PxP PxP 14. B–B4 N–B4

The active position of Black's pieces, the QN-file, and the weakness of White's QP more than sufficiently compensate Black for the sacrificed pawn.

15. O–O–O N–N5 16. KR–K1 Q–B2! 17. R–Q2

White can no longer hold on to his trophy.

17. . . . R–N1 18. Q–R2 N/5xB 19. PxN NxP 20. RxN QxN 21. R–B3 QxPR 22. K–N1 Q–N8ch 23. R–B1 B–B4ch 24. K–R1 Q–K6, and Black won.

The Journey Will Be Dangerous

The Queen's premature venture on stage in the opening may have unpleasant consequences. The enormous power of this piece is at the same time its Achilles' heel: if engaged by an opposing

pawn or minor piece the Queen is forced to retreat. This phenomenon underlies a widely popular type of developing sacrifice aimed at drawing the opponent's Queen into the center of one's own camp thus gaining a time advantage by successively attacking the giant. We will call these "baiting" sacrifices (a version of the developing sacrifice). In the game that follows, Black chose a difficult opening variation and was of necessity drawn into a risky chase after the central pawns.

Hanover, 1902

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Pillsbury *Swidersky*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 P–QN3(?)

A dubious move which weakens the QR4–K8 diagonal. But how can its drawbacks be exposed?

4. N–B3 B–N2 5. PxP PxP 6. P–K4!

That's how—by sacrificing a center pawn!

6. . . . PxP?

Better is 6. . . . N–KB3, aiming at faster development.

7. N–K5!

The idea behind the sacrifice is obvious: by threatening 8. B–QB4 (as well as 8. B–N5ch, if such an opportunity presents itself), White greatly hampers Black's normal development. Thus, on 7. . . . N–KB3 there will follow 8. B–QB4 N–Q4 9. Q–R4ch! Understandably, Black hastens to exchange the active Knight on K5.

7. . . . B–Q3 8. Q–N4!

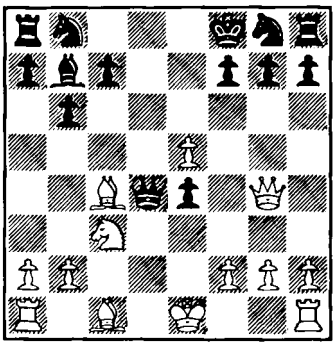
However weak the opponent's play, it can only be refuted by energetic moves of utmost accuracy. This contention is particularly true for the opening stage since any advantage in development is of a transient nature no matter how great the edge: if the attack is carried out in a trivial or leisurely manner, the advantage is

likely to evaporate. Pillsbury's move is very strong since it takes aim at the momentarily weakened pawn on KN7, forcing the following unpalatable move:

8. . . . K–B1

After 8. . . . P–N3 9. B–QB4 Black's position is totally deplorable.

9. B–QB4! BxN 10. PxB Q–Q5



Black should not be faulted for this move, since he faces grave difficulties on all other continuations. In attacking White's pawn on K5 he clearly failed to anticipate the opponent's ingenious reply. Is there any way out? Alas, White's attack cannot be contained after either 10. . . . N–Q2 11. B–B4 or 10. . . . N–K2 11. B–KN5. Black's crucial errors were committed at an earlier stage.

11. B–Q5! P–QB3

On 11. . . . BxB there follows 12. Q–B8ch K–K2 13. B–N5ch P–B3 14. R–Q1 with disastrous consequences.

12. BxKP QxP 13. B–B4

Now the pursuit of the Queen begins, yielding White free tempos.

13. . . . N–B3 14. Q–R4 Q–K2 15. O–O–O N–K1 16. Q–N3 N–R3 17. KR–K1

White throws his last hitherto inactive piece into battle. . . .

17. . . . R–Q1 18. B–Q5! Q–B4 19. RxNch

Still stronger is the sacrifice of a piece with 19. BxKBP!, giving White an irresistible attack.

19. . . . KxR 20. QxP PxB 21. QxRch K–Q2 22. QxP K–B1 23. QxP!

The Black King succeeds in hiding on the opposite flank, but by now there is no changing the fate of the game.

23. . . . P–Q5 24. Q–K6ch R–Q2 25. Q–N8ch R–Q1 26. Q–N4ch R–Q2 27. B–K3! BxP 28. RxP B–B3 29. RxR BxR 30. Q–N8ch, Black resigned

We have just been witnesses to a highly instructive sight: a classic developing sacrifice 6. P–K4! (which Black should have declined), followed by a baiting sacrifice (9. B–QB4!) and a systematic pursuit of the opponent's Queen drawn into the maelstrom of events, and finally a devastating attack—a logical outcome.

In the following game, Black used what seemed to be an active idea in the opening and won a center pawn at the expense of a couple of tempos. The inherent riskiness of this scheme is far from obvious, but White's exceptionally energetic play managed to expose it nonetheless.

Varna, 1962

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Najdorf *Portisch*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. N–B3 P–B4 5. BPxP NxP 6. P–K3

One of the widely used positions of the Semi-Tarrasch Defense. Usually Black maintains the tension in the center (refusing to exchange on Q4), striving for the fastest development possible. The Hungarian grandmaster, however, decided to experiment with a different plan.

6. . . . PxP 7. PxP B–N5

Precisely the experimental idea in question. Black now threatens to win a pawn.

8. Q–B2 N–QB3 9. B–Q3! NxN

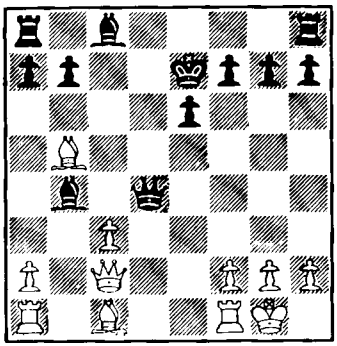
Having said "a" it is hard not to say "b." Objectively stronger is 9. . . . B–K2 10. P–QR3 N–B3 11. O–O–O, completing the development, even if it is at a loss of time. However, Portisch did not have the benefit of hindsight as we do.

10. PxN NxP 11. NxN QxN 12. B–N5ch! K–K2

12. . . . B–Q2 fails due to 13. BxBch KxB 14. Q–R4ch. The first tangible result of the sacrifice: Black has lost castling.

13. O–O!

Portisch clearly underestimated this classically imperturbable move. Najdorf sacrifices another pawn for the sake of development.



13. . . . QxP

In for a penny, in for a pound! On 13. . . . Q–B4 14. B–R4 QxP (or 14. . . . BxP 15. B–Q2 B–Q5 16. Q–N3, etc.) 15. B–N5ch! (also good, of course, is 15. Q–K2, as in the text) 15. . . . P–B3 16. B–Q2! QxB 17. Q–B7ch B–Q2 18. QR–Q1 QR–QB1 19. Q–N3! or 13. . . . Q–K4 14. PxB QxB 15. P–QR4 Q–B3 16. Q–K2 P–B3 17. P–N5 Q–K1 18. B–R3ch K–B2 19. QR–B1, White's attack would develop equally unhindered, but Black would at least have an impressive material advantage.

14. Q–K2!

A subtle move. White avoids exchanging Queens, keeping alive the powerful threats 15. B–N5ch, to be followed by QR–B1, or 15. B–N2. Black parries the more unpleasant of them.

14. . . . B–Q3 15. B–N2 Q–R4 16. KR–Q1 R–Q1 17. Q–R5!

Najdorf carries out the conclusive attack with great skill. The threat of 18. Q–N5ch forces Black to weaken his King's position still further.

17. . . . P–B3 18. QxP!

The crux of White's entire plan—now the Bishop cannot be captured (18. . . . QxB) in view of 19. QxPch K–K1 20. BxP, leaving Black utterly helpless. A typical instance: White's profoundly thought-out strategy is crowned by a combinational finale.

18. . . . K–B2 19. B–K2! Q–KN4 20. B–QB1!

Filigree precision clear to the end! Even at this stage with the fate of the game entirely clear, a transposition of moves would lead to unnecessary complications: 20. B–R5ch K–K2 21. B–B1 BxPch!, forcing 22. K–R1 (but not 22. KxB? Q–R5ch 23. K–N1 RxRch, and Black wins). In general, chess gives the widest possible choice of mediocre or poor moves but is exceedingly stingy with good ones! This is true even in winning positions.

20. . . . BxPch

Desperation.

21. KxB Q–K4ch 22. P–B4, Black resigned.

Lugansk, 1955

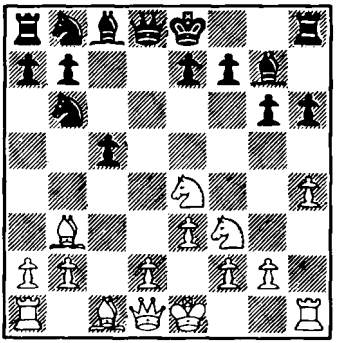
GRÜNFELD DEFENSE

Nei *Shamkovich*

1. P–QB4 N–KB3 2. N–QB3 P–Q4 3. PxP NxP 4. N–B3 P–KN3 5. P–KR4?

A blank charge, accomplishing at most the weakening of KN4, since the P–R5 threat is not dangerous.

5. . . . P–KR3 6. P–K3 B–N2 7. B–B4 N–N3 8. B–N3 P–QB4 9. N–K4?



In attacking the pawn on QB4 White counted on 9. . . . QN–Q2 10. P–Q4 with good play. However, the text move involves a loss of time, actually inviting a pawn sacrifice on White's part. Correct is 9. P–Q4.

9. . . . P–B5!

Apart from gaining a time advantage and drawing the White Queen into the thick of battle, this sacrifice is further motivated by the weakness of the Q3- and KN4-squares, which will become particularly felt after the exchange of White's KB.

10. BxP

On 10. B–B2 N–B3 Black has excellent play.

10. . . . NxB 11. Q–R4ch N–B3 12. QxN B–B4 13. N–B5 R–QB1!

A familiar situation: the pieces of the active party join the battle one after another with tempo, all thanks to the vulnerability of the opponent's Queen.

14. P–KN4

A futile attempt to escape the mounting pressure. The threat was 14. . . . P–N3 15. N–N3 N–Q5.

14. . . . P–QN4! 15. QxNP BxKNP 16. N–R2 B–B4 17. P–K4

White's position is compromised to such an extent that "normal" play is totally unthinkable. On 17. P–Q4 there follows 17. . . . O–O, threatening 18. . . . P–K4 or 18. . . . BxQP. Therefore White attempts to remedy the situation by tactical means: if 17. . . . B–R6, then White could play 18. Q–Q3, forcing the exchange of Queens. The weakening of the Q4-square, however, suggests a piece sacrifice to Black.

17. . . . O–O! 18. PxB Q–Q4 19. O–O

An occasion when castling is powerless to defend the King.

19. . . . NPxP 20. P–Q3 N–Q5, White resigned.

The Queen's hyperactivity early in the opening is also likely to lead to a more prosaic finale, namely, its inglorious death.

Göteborg, 1955

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Bronstein *Geller*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5

An ingenious continuation employed as a rule to avoid well-known variations.

3. . . . P–KN3 4. P–B3 B–N2

A serious error: Black simply has to prevent White from forming a powerful pawn center. Correct is 4. . . . N–B3, with . . . B–N2 coming only in response to 5. Q–K2, followed by 6. P–Q4 PxP 7. PxP P–Q4!, blocking the White pawns.

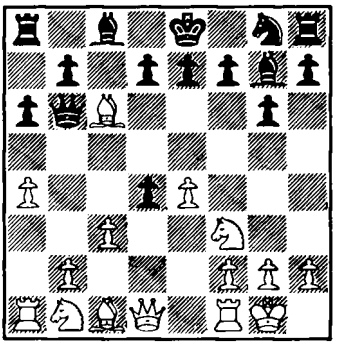
5. P–Q4 Q–N3

So that's what grandmaster Geller had in mind. The simultaneous attack on the Bishop and the QP poses a dilemma for White: to exchange the Bishop with no gain whatsoever or to sacrifice the center pawn? Bronstein naturally preferred the latter alternative, which assured White's lasting initiative.

6. P–QR4 PxP 7. O–O! P–QR3!

Obviously not 7. . . . PxP due to 8. NxP. In such situations, the defender should refrain from helping his opponent develop pieces.

8. BxN



8 . . . QxB?

All of a sudden Geller's sense of danger fails him. Of course, he should have played 8. . . . QPxN 9. PxP N–B3 and on 10. P–R5 responded with 10. . . . Q–B2 11. N–B3 O–O with somewhat cramped but fully acceptable play. Only in this way could Black's opening experiment be vindicated. Whereas the way Geller actually played showed that the pawn he won was too costly an acquisition.

9. PxP QxKP 10. N–B3 Q–B4 11. R–K1!

Probing for the Achilles' heel of Black's position—the pawn on K2—and simultaneously hindering the development of the opponent's pieces: on 11. . . . N–B3 there would follow 12. R–K5!, winning the Queen. From this moment on, threatening Black's Queen becomes an organic part of White's over-all strategy.

11. . . . P–Q4

On 11. . . . P–Q3 there could follow 12. N–K4!, threatening 13. NxQPch. If 12. . . . B–K3, still there follows 13. NxQPch PxN 14. P–Q5 with better play for White.

12. P–R5!

Showing up the weakness on QN6 and threatening the maneuver N–QR4–N6. Black parries this threat.

12. . . . B–Q2 13. Q–N3 N–B3??

A flagrant oversight which is, however, easily explained. In order to complete his development, Black decided to hand back the material and then some (14. QxNP O–O 15. RxP), but he forgot about White's main threat! Nevertheless, even after 13. . . . B–QB3 14. B–N5! (very strong is 14. Q–N4 as well), Black would be hard put to maintain the balance, as is clear from the following variations: 14. . . . N–B3 15. R–K5 Q–Q2 16. QR–K1 P–K3 17. BxN BxB 18. NxP! BxR 19. N–N6 Q–K2 20. P–Q5! or 14. . . . P–B3 15. B–Q2 K–B2 16. N–K4! N–R3 17. B–N4 KR–K1 18. BxP. Clearly, Black can no longer contain his opponent.

14. R–K5 Q–Q6 15. RxPch! K–R 16. NxPch NxN 17. QxQ, Black resigned.

Wijk aan Zee, 1974

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Browne *Quinteros*

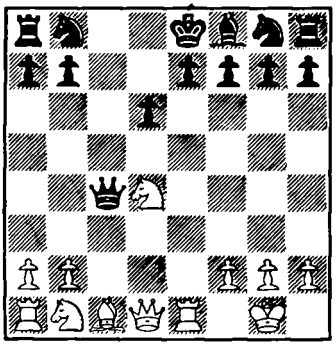
1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. B–N5ch B–Q2 4. BxBch QxB 5. P–B4 Q–N5?!

This is a desperately bold move, which we cannot recommend.

6. O–O QxP 7. P–Q4 PxP

In Karaklajic–Nikolic, Yugoslavia 1973, 7. . . . N–KB3 was tried instead but also led to swift disaster: 8. N–B3 Q–N5 9. N–QN5 Q–Q2 10. PxP PxP 11. B–B4! O–O–O 12. Q–R4 Q–B4 13. B–N3 P–QR3 14. QR–Q1 RxR 15. RxR N–B3 16. Q–R5!! and Black resigned.

8. R–K1 Q–B3 9. NxP QxBP?



"I couldn't believe my eyes when Quinteros greedily swallowed the second pawn," Walter Browne wrote in his notes. Actually, the capture of the second pawn in this position is pure suicide; however, the quiet move 9. . . . Q–Q2 also leads to a difficult position for Black after 10. N–N5 P–K3 11. B–B4, as in Sokolsky–Szuchinsky, U.S.S.R., Kharkov, 1948.

9. N–R3 Q–B1 10. N/R–N5

With the unpleasant threat of 11. NxPch; if 10. . . . P–K3, then 11. N–B5.

10. . . . Q–Q2 12. B–B4 P–K4 13. BxP!

Of course! His great advantage in development gives White every reason for this sacrifice which opens the position of Black's King. The further course of this game needs no notes.

13. . . . PxB 14. RxPch B–K2 15. R–Q5! Q–B1 16. N–B5 K–B1 17. NxB KxN 18. R–K5ch. Black resigned.

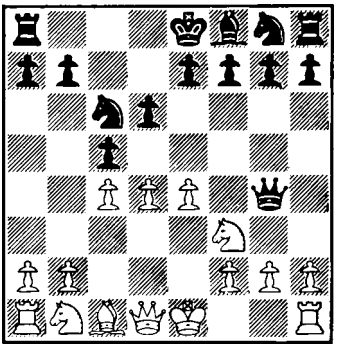
Sometimes because of almost indiscernible nuances, an outwardly dubious Queen thrust may bring forth good chances for counterplay.

Moscow, 1975

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Stean *Geller*

1. P-K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. B–N5ch B–Q2 4. BxBch QxB 5. P–B4 N–QB3 6. P–Q4 Q–N5!?



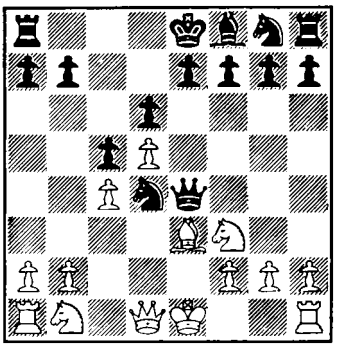
7. P–Q5!

The best reply. The natural moves 7. N–B3 and 7. O–O give White nothing better than equal play after 7. . . . NxP!

7. . . . QxPch

In case of 7. . . . N–Q5 8. QN–Q2 the Black Queen's maneuver loses all substance since 8. . . . QxP 9. R–N1 Q–R6 10. P–K5! clearly favors White.

8. B–K3 N–Q5



Can Black be punished for his eccentric plan? Analysis shows that the task is far from simple. On 9. N–B3 there follows . . . NxNch 10. PxN QxBP, and 9. QN–Q2 leads to 9. . . . N–B7ch 10. K–K2 Q–B4 (but not 10. . . . NxB? 11. Q–R4ch!) 11. R–QB1 NxB or simply 9. . . . NxNch with satisfactory play.

Along with this self-evident lunge, White had several tempting attack options replete with sacrifices; for example, 9. NxN PxN 10. N–B3!? PxN 11. Q–R4ch K–Q1 12. O–O or 10. . . . QxNP 11. Q–

R4ch K–Q1 12. BxP!!? (the spirit of the great Anderssen is forever with us) QxRch 13. K–Q2 QxR 14. B–N6ch PxB 15. QxRch K–Q2 16. QxPch K–Q1 17. Q–N8ch with perpetual check (or 17. N–N5 QxPch with the same result). Unfortunately, no reincarnation of the "immortal game" is in evidence.

Another plan looks sounder: 9. NxN PxN 10. QxP QxNP 11. R–B1 QxRP 12. B–B4! Q–R5?! 13. P–B5! PxP? 14. Q–R4ch K–Q1 15. B–B7ch capturing the opponent's Queen. Stronger certainly is 12. . . . Q–R6, although after 13. N–B3 Q–Q2 14. O–O–O N–B3 15. KR–K1 White keeps his pressure.

White's actual continuation is weaker, in our opinion.

9. Q–R4ch P–N4!?

This move leads, however strangely, to a draw. Black could play simply 9. . . . K–Q1, after which it is very difficult for White to use his superiority for development.

Here are the approximate variations: (*a*) 10. QN–Q2 N–B7ch 11. K–K2 Q–N3 12. QR–QB1 NxB; (*b*) 10. N–B3 NxNch 11. PxN QxKBP 12. R–KN1 P–KN3 13. N–N5 B–R3! 14. BxB NxB, and Black has a material and positional advantage, since the position of White's King is very insecure; and (*c*) 10. NxN!? PxN (dangerous for Black is 10. . . . QxNP due to 11. Q–R5ch P–N3 12. N–B6ch K–K1 13. Q–R4!) 11. O–O (11. N–B3 leads to the variation above) 11. . . . PxB 12. N–B3 Q–B4 13. PxP Q–Q2, and it is unlikely that White has sufficient compensation for the piece, but Black must play very carefully.

10. Q–R6 N–B7ch

The onset of an intriguing counterattack.

11. K–Q2

11. K–Q1 seems more accurate in order to counter 11. . . . Q–Q6ch with 12. QN–Q2.

11. . . . Q–Q6ch! 12. K–B1

If 12. KxQ, then . . . N–N5ch and 13. . . . NxQ.

12. . . . R–N1 13. QxRP

In addition to 13. . . . NxR, 13. . . . N–N5 was threatened.

13. . . . R–Q1 14. Q–N7 NxR

The opponents agreed to a draw since White has to resort to perpetual check with 15. Q–B6ch R–Q2 16. Q–B8ch, etc.

In the following game Black managed to hold his own thanks to an extremely fine defense and a timely counteroffensive.

8TH MATCH GAME, 1963

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

Botvinnik *Petrosian*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 N–KB3 4. P–K3 P–K3 5. BxP P–B4 6. O–O P–QR3 7. P–QR4

Botvinnik's favorite move to prevent an "extended fianchetto" (. . . P–QN4 and . . . B–N2). Its shortcoming (exploited by Petrosian) is the weakening of the QN4-square. More customary is 7. Q–K2.

7. . . . N–B3 8. Q–K2 B–K2

In subsequent match games (the tenth and sixteenth), Petrosian continued 8. . . . PxP 9. R–Q1 B–K2 10. PxP O–O but failed to achieve complete equality.

9. PxP BxP

In Botvinnik's opinion, stronger is 9. . . . N–K5 10. N–Q4 NxQBP.

10. P–K4!

With the unambiguous threat of 11. P–K5—a real danger in this variation. The advance of the KP would give White's pieces an excellent outpost on K4 with prospects of an all-out attack. On 10. . . . O–O there follows 11. P–K5 N–Q4 12. QN–Q2, threatening 13. N–K4. Since there is no stopping White's center pawn (10. . . . P–K4? 11. BxPch!), other countermeasures are in order.

10. . . . N–KN5!

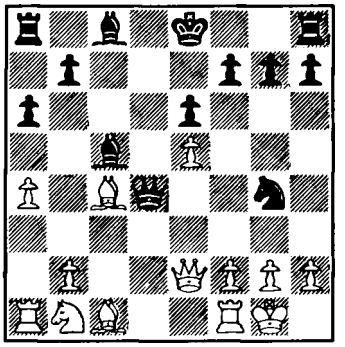
The strongest possible answer, creating an unpleasant threat of

11. . . . KN–K4. If 12. B–B4, as in the sixth game of this match, then 12. . . . Q–B3! 13. B–KN3 KN–K4 with good play for Black.

11. P–K5! N–Q5!

The inner logic of this crucial phase in the opening battle is very interesting. Beginning with the 10th move, each move by Black and White alike is fraught with some concrete threat. With his last move White offered a pawn sacrifice, and Black had to accept it whether he liked it or not, given the threat of 12. P–R3 and of the White Knight's going to K4.

12. NxN QxN



A familiar situation: the Black Queen's unstable position affords White's pieces rich possibilities for "tempo" development.

13. N–R3!

A strong move which confronts Black with formidable problems. White threatens 14. N–B2, but to capture the pawn on K4 (13. . . . NxKP) is very dangerous in view of 14. B–K3 Q–Q3 15. KR–Q1 Q–K2 16. BxB QxB 17. P–QN4! Q–B2 18. QR–B1 with numerous threats. Petrosian makes a manly decision to exchange his strong Bishop.

13. . . . BxN! 14. RxB NxKP 15. P–QN3!

This game has been analyzed by many luminaries of theory. Since Botvinnik did not succeed, other avenues of attack have been recommended, such as 15. B–R2 or R–QB3 or R–Q1, but

detailed analysis shows that none of them gives White a decisive advantage. Balancing on a tightrope with an acrobat's adroitness, Black manages to maintain equality. Here is one of the variations: 15. R–Q1 Q–N5! (bad is 15. . . . QxB due to 16. QxN O–O 17. B–R6 P–B3 18. Q–N3! and White wins) 16. Q–Q2! O–O 17. B–K2 Q–R5 and White has difficulty in intensifying the pressure.

The continuation chosen by Botvinnik is quite justified on positional grounds: the threat is 16. B–N2, and if Black plays . . . NxB the QB enters play along the open third rank.

15. . . . Q–B4 16. R–R2

More consistent is 16. B–N2, forcing Black to return the pawn after 16. . . . NxB 17. PxN B–Q2 18. R–N3 O–O–O 19. RxNP Q–KB4 with approximately equal play. Sharp play arises after 16. P–QN4 QxB 17. QxN O–O 18. R–QB3 Q–Q4 19. Q–N3 with the threats of 20. B–R6 and 20. R–B7. However, after 18. . . . P–B3! the sky is cloudless for Black. With particularly precise defense Petrosian maintains equality.

16. . . . NxB 17. PxN B–Q2 18. B–R3 Q–B4 19. R–Q2 B–B3

Black has overcome all problems in developing his QB, and it now only remains for him to protect his King.

20. R–K1 P–KR4! 21. Q–K3 P–B3!

A timely return of the pawn. On 21. . . . P–R5? there follows 22. R–Q5! BxR 23. Q–B5 Q–KN4 24. PxB with an attack.

22. QxPch QxQ 23. RxQch K–B2, and the game ended in a draw.

In this game the attack and the defense were worthy of each other—a rare instance in tournament practice. The outcome was entirely appropriate: the initial sacrifice of a center pawn led to a position of dynamic equilibrium.

There are double-edged gambit systems and variations built around precisely this bold operation. The closed nature of the opening, the mobility of the as yet undeveloped pieces, tactical and positional subtleties, all these factors may contribute to success. Here is a typical example.

U.S.S.R., 1959

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Nikitin *Furman*

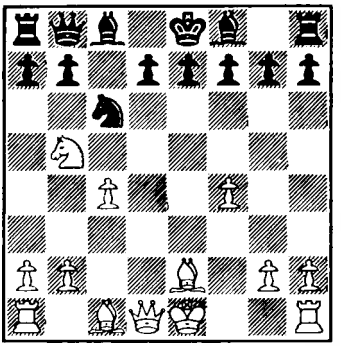
1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP Q–B2 5. P–QB4 N–B3 6. N–QB3 NxP!? 7. NxN Q–K4 8. N–N5

The most energetic retort. Weaker is 8. N–B3 in view of 8. . . . QxNch 9. B–K2 P–Q3 10. O–O B–B4! and the Black Queen in the center is not that deep in distress.

8. . . . QxNch 9. B–K2 Q–K4

In the face of the N–B7ch threat the Black Queen has to return to its own camp without further delay.

10. P–B4 Q–N1



Black made four (4!) Queen moves in a row just to win White's KP. In any open game this kind of profligacy with invaluable time would be tantamount to suicide. But in this closed position where there are no vulnerable spots in the Black camp, his daring maneuver succeeds almost with impunity. In spite of a considerable time advantage White finds it extremely difficult to achieve a tangible positional edge.

11. B–K3 P–KN3 12. Q–Q2 B–N2 13. P–KR4 P–KR4 14. P–KN4 PxP 15. BxNP P–Q3 16. B–K2 B–B4, with excellent play for Black.

Instead of 11. B–K3 Tal recommended 11. P–B5 which was followed (Witkowski–Gromek, Warsaw 1959) by 11. . . . P–KN3

12. O–O P–QR3 13. N–QB3 B–N2 14. N–Q5 B–K4 15. K–R1 P–QN4 16. B–K3 with a deadly initiative for White. However, Gromek failed to find the best defense. Had he played (after 11. P–B5) 11. . . . P–K3! 12. O–O P–QR3 13. N–QB3 B–Q3, Black would have emerged with substantial counterplay.

Thus the closed nature of the opening is the chief factor in Black's successful defense in this gambit system: the players' forces do not come into contact for a very long time.

NP Hunting

In some openings, the pawns on QN2 or QN7 tempt the Queen's appetite. Black's favorite maneuver to capture the QN2 pawn is . . . Q–N3 and . . . QxNP (or . . . Q–K2–N5ch and . . . QxNP). Despite the obvious element of risk—the maneuver involves a substantial loss of time—numerous games and gambit systems embody this daring idea. The attractive feature of this long Queen's journey lies in that, having captured the pawn, the Queen creates certain threats on the Queenside thereby putting the brakes on the opponent's attacking thrust. In this expedition, success depends on quite a few positional and tactical factors.

Here are two examples of the Classical Variation of the French Defense:

1. P–K4 P–K3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. B–N5 B–K2 5. P–K5 KN–Q2 6. BxB QxB 7. P–B4 Q–N5? 8. Q–Q2 QxNP? 9. R–N1 Q–R6 10. N–N5 QxP 11. NxPch K–Q1 12. R–B1! (or **12. R–Q1**) **12. . . . KxN 13. Q–B3ch N–B3 14. R–R1,** winning the Queen.

Or, after the first seven moves, **7. . . . P–QR3! 8. N–B3 P–QB4 9. B–Q3?** (better is 9. PxP) **9. . . . PxP 10. NxP/4 Q–N5! 11. N/4–K2 QxP 12. O–O Q–N3ch 13. K–R1 N–QB3** and White has no compensation for the pawn (Em. Lasker–Levenfich, Moscow 1925).

In the first example the Queen's sally aimed at merely capturing the pawn was not supported by the other pieces with the result that the Queen perished. In the second example the Black Queen's

bold maneuver involved almost no loss of time due to the instability of the White Knights and the weakened KN1–QR7 diagonal.

Of course, there are quite a few opening variations in which the sacrifice of a NP, particularly that on QN2, leads to a complicated position with mutual chances. A graphic case in point is a well-known variation of Najdorf System in the Sicilian Defense: 1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. B–KN5 P–K3 7. P–B4 Q–N3 8. Q–Q2 QxNP.

In spite of perennial hot debates and numerous analytical works, there is still no consensus on which side gains from such a sacrifice. As a reminder, Spassky beat Fischer in the sensational eleventh game of the 1971 match with this very variation playing White, whereas five years later Portisch used that same variation is his decisive game of the Interzonal Tournament against Tal and won playing Black. An end to the controversy is nowhere in sight.

In most cases, however, the sacrifice of the NP results in a dangerous initiative for the active side.

EXHIBITION GAME

Paris, 1913

GIUOCO PIANO

Rodzynski *Alekhine*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 P–Q3 4. P–B3 B–N5 5. Q–N3

"This game is a typical example of the dangers White confronts in an effort to refute the move 3. . . . P–Q3 immediately," Alekhine noted.

5. . . . Q–Q2 6. N–N5?

A rather primitive attack based on an erroneous combination. More consistent is 6. QxNP R–QN1 7. Q–R6, although Black would receive adequate compensation for the pawn: 7. . . . BxN 8. PxB B–K2 9. P–Q3 B–B3 10. N–Q2 KN–K2 and White's Kingside is weakened. Of no use is 6. BxPch QxB 7. QxNP due to 7. . . . K–Q2 8. QxR BxN 9. PxB QxP 10. R–KN1 QxKPch 11. K–Q1 Q–B6ch 12. K–K1 P–K5! with an irrefutable threat of 13. . . . N–K4.

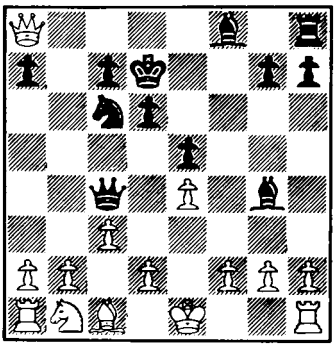
6. . . . N–R3 7. BxPch?

Also bad is 7. NxBP due to 7. . . . N–R4!

7. . . . NxB 8. NxN QxN?

A historic curiosity! Alekhine could have won a piece—and the game for that matter—at once with 8. . . . B–K3 (pointed out by Konstantinopolsky) but was carried away by another continuation of the attack, a prettier and more original one. Young Alekhine's motivation is easy to understand: the scene of the game was the celebrated cafe Régence packed with spectators. But, oh, those commentators! Most of them overlooked this simple possibility although the game is given in scores of books. So this game is of little theoretical value but is interesting nonetheless because of Alekhine's plan and brilliant final attack.

9. QxP K–Q2! 10. QxR Q–QB5!



That is what the White Queen's flippancy has led to. Having got helplessly mired far behind the enemy lines, it is in no position to help its King. Worse still, the White Queen only facilitates the lightning development of the opponent's pieces, as is evidenced by the game move as well as the variation 11. P–Q3 QxQP 12. P–B3 BxP! 13. PxB B–K2! 14. QxR B–R5 mate.

11. P–B3 BxP!

The game has assumed a sharply combinational character, virtually ruling out any "side solution." Wrong is 11. N–Q5, as Alekhine pointed out, due to 12. P–Q3! QxP 13. PxN BxP 14. N–B3.

12. PxB N–Q5! 13. P–Q3?

The decisive error. Only with 13. PxN QxBch 14. K–K2 QxR 15. P–Q5, handing back the "surplus," could White hope for a chance of salvation. Now a spectacular finale.

13. . . . QxP 14. PxN B–K2! 15. QxR B–R5 mate.

Let us discuss now various sacrifices of the White pawn on QN2.

U.S.S.R. CHAMPIONSHIP

Leningrad, 1974

QUEEN PAWN OPENING

Vaganian *Kupreichik*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. B–N5 P–B4 3. P–Q5 Q–N3?!

Black believes that the closed nature of the position will help him win the pawn on QN2 with impunity, provided, of course, that White shows enough generosity. Indeed, after 4. BxN PxB 5. N–Q2 QxP 6. P–K3 P–B4! 7. R–N1 Q–KB3 8. B–Q3 B–R3 9. N–K2 P–Q3 10. N–KN3 (Hort–Hartston, Hastings 1972/73) 10. . . . P–K3! (instead of 10. . . . P–KB5?) leads to a game with mutual chances. But Vaganian chooses a more active plan.

4. N–QB3! QxP 5. B–Q2 Q–N3 6. P–K4 P–Q3 7. P–B4

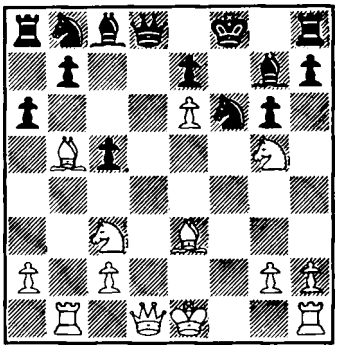
A well-known Modern Benoni Defense structure but with White having the advantage of a couple of extra tempos and a semiopen QN-file important for active operations. White already threatens to breakthrough in the center with 8. P–K5. On 7. . . . P–K3 there follows 8. R–N1 Q–Q1 9. B–N5ch B–Q2 10. PxP PxP 11. P–K5 PxP 12. PxP N–Q4 13. Q–N4! N–QB3 14. N–B3 and all White's forces are poised for action. The least evil for Black seems to be 7. . . . QN–Q2 8. N–B3 Q–B2.

7. . . . P–N3? 8. P–K5 PxP

In Vaganian–Jansa, Kragujevac 1974, Black played 8. . . . KN–Q2 after which there followed 9. N–B3 B–N2 10. R–N1 Q–Q1 11.

P–K6 PxP 12. N–KN5! with an attack for White. The exchange of the pawns only speeds up the denouement.

9. PxP KN–Q2 10. N–B3 B–N2 11. R–QN1 Q–Q1 12. P–K6! PxP 13. N–KN5 N–KB3 14. B–N5ch K–B1 15. PxP P–QR3 16. B–K3!



The catastrophic weakness of the last rank is the cause of Black's undoing.

16. . . . Q–R4 17. O–O P–R3

If 17. . . . PxB then 18. RxP Q–B2 19. N–Q5 Q–K4 20. BxP with a rout.

18. Q–Q3! K–N1 19. QxP. Black resigned.

In the following game White had to toil in the sweat of his brow to break into the opponent's fortress.

Leningrad, 1963

QUEEN'S PAWN OPENING

Spassky *Osnos*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. N–KB3 P–K3 3. B–N5 P–B4 4. P–K3 Q–N3

The Queen sally here is more appropriate than in the previous game. White has stripped the QNP of protection before bringing out his QN, and play is still more or less closed. So why not attack this pawn?

5. QN–Q2!

To sacrifice the pawn is the most logical and cogent decision since defending it with 5. Q–B1 or 5. R–QN1 brings no benefits. This disputed gambit variation has been introduced recently.

5. . . . QxP 6. B–Q3 PxP

Black faces an obvious task: to eliminate his increasingly dangerous lag in development by bringing all of his pieces into play and retarding the activation of his opponent's pieces. As we know, this task is not so easy. The exchange on Q4, required to secure a retreat route for the Queen, has a serious shortcoming: it opens the K-file, which is very convenient for White in transferring his pieces to the decisive sector of the battle theater. On 6. . . . N–B3 Igor Bondarevsky points out a strong continuation 7. O–O! PxP 8. R–N1! QxRP (bad is 8. . . . Q–B6 9. N–B4! with the threat of R–N3) 9. PxP. Still better is 9. N–B4! Q–R5 10. PxP and Black's Queen is in jeopardy. Perhaps strongest of all is the natural move 6. . . . P–Q4.

7. PxP Q–B6 8. O–O P–Q4 9. R–K1 B–K2 10. R–K3!

See the remarks to the 6th move: as in Alekhine's game, White's Rook is ready to plunge into the thick of battle.

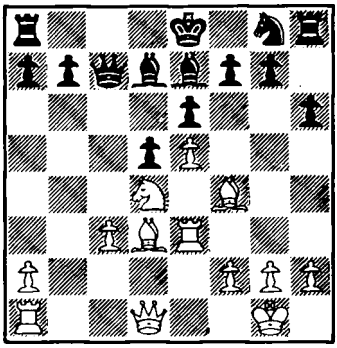
10. . . . Q–B2 11. N–K5 N–B3 12. P–QB3!

In calmly consolidating his center White takes into account the fact that Kingside castling is no longer possible: 12. . . . O–O? 13. BxN BxB 14. BxPch, etc.

12. . . . NxN 13. PxN N–N1 14. N–B3 P–KR3

Here it is necessary to seriously consider Queenside castling (14. . . . B–Q2) although the semiopen QN-file does not promise carefree life for Black's King. But a catastrophe in the center is unavoidable. The exchange of Bishops also grants no reprieve: 14. . . . BxB 15. NxB N–K2 16. Q–R5 N–B3 17. NxRP!, etc.

15. B–KB4 B–Q2 16. N–Q4



16. . . . B–KN4?

Black simply had no alternative but to castle long which would have given him at least some practical chances. However, after 16. . . . O–O–O 17. P–QR4! B–B4 18. R–K2 with the subsequent doubling of the Rooks on the QN-file, White's pressure would have been very strong.

17. BxB PxB 18. Q–N4! QxBP

This desperate move brings the game a step closer to the end, but after 18. . . . O–O–O 19. QxNP P–KN3 20. B–N5! Black's fate is not sweet either.

19. N–N3! N–R3 20. QxP Q–N5 21. R–N3!

Spassky conducts his attack with great poise and precision. He is not distracted by the chance to recover his pawn (21. QxP). The paramount objective is to keep the Black King in the center and bring up reserves for the decisive attack.

21. . . . Q–B1 22. R–QB1 P–B3

22. . . . R–B1 is bad due to 23. RxRch BxR 24. B–N5ch B–Q2 25. R–QB3!

23. Q–K3 P–B4 24. N–B5 P–B5 25. B–N6ch K–K2 26. Q–R3!

Black resigned since there is no satisfactory defense to the threat of mate (27. NxP).

In the following game the chief cause of the debacle was not so much the Queen's expedition as Black's subsequent errors.

Amsterdam, 1964

PIRC DEFENSE

Tal *Tringov*

1. P–K4 P–KN3 2. P–Q4 B–N2 3. N–QB3 P–Q3 4. N–B3 P–QB3 5. B–KN5 Q–N3?!

Of course 5. . . . N–B3 is more cautious, but the Bulgarian grandmaster is no coward.

6. Q–Q2 QxNP 7. R–QN1 Q–R6 8. B–QB4 Q–R4 9. O–O P–K3?

White is already in the middlegame whereas Black has still to deploy his forces. But the Black camp shows no weaknesses, and this is his chief trump card. The continuation should be 9. . . . N–Q2! 10. KR–K1 N–N3 11. B–N3 B–K3 with counterplay. However, after 10. P–K5! N–N3 (or 10. . . . PxP 11. KR–K1! PxP 12. BxP! with an attack) 11. B–N3 P–Q4 12. P–KR3 and White still preserves his pressure because it is very difficult for Black to complete his Kingside development. Still Black's text move is much weaker because it leads to a weakening of the Q3-pawn and to an opening of lines.

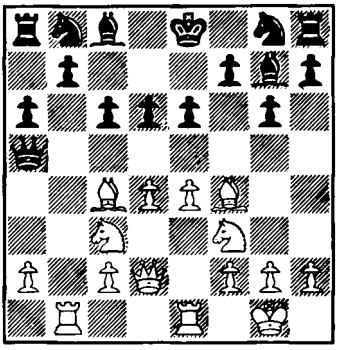
10. KR–K1!

A very useful move, intended not merely to foil Black's breakthrough but also to achieve a farsighted objective.

10. . . . P–QR3

Loses more time and creates a new weakness on QN3. But Black feared, and not without good reason, the lunge 11. N–N5! as a response to 10. . . . N–Q2 or even 10. . . . N–B3. 10. . . . N–K2 is bad due to 11. BxN KxB 12. N–Q5ch.

11. B–B4!



A quiet move but one that settles the game. Since the reply 11. . . . B–B1 does not "look good," the pawn can be defended in two ways: 11. . . . Q–B2 and 11. . . . Q–Q1. Bondarevsky recommended the former as the lesser of the evils in *Learn to Play Chess*: "In this case White would have to work really hard to mount a direct attack." One can hardly agree—the position is ripe for a decisive attack: 10. . . . Q–B2 11. P–K5! P–Q4 12. BxP!! BPxB (more steadfast, of course, is 12. . . . N–K2, but after 13. B–N3 with N–K4 to follow White has a great positional advantage) 13. NxQP! (the weakness of the QN3-square compels Black to accept this sacrifice as well, for on 13. . . . Q–Q1 there follows 14. N–N6 R–R2 15. P–Q5! with numerous threats) 13. . . . PxN 14. P–K6! (the front has been breached) 14. . . . Q–Q1 15. PxPch KxP 16. N–N5ch K–B1 17. RxP! (The simplest move. Less clear is 17. Q–N4ch N–K2 18. RxN QxR 19. B–Q6 B–B3, since Black gets sizable compensation for the Queen) 17. . . . N–R3 (after 17. . . . BxR 18. N–K6ch K–K2 19. NxQch KxN 20. Q–R5ch Black cannot escape mate) 18. BxN and Black's time is running out.

An equally devastating breakthrough follows 10. . . . Q–Q1. For instance, 11. P–Q5! BPxP (11. . . . P–K4 12. PxP! NxP 13. B–KN5 P–B3 14. B–K3 and Black's position is untenable) 12. PxP P–K4 13. N–K4! (Q6 is still weak and White takes aim at it.) 13. . . . N–K2 14. NxQPch!! QxN 15. NxP and again the fatal nature of Black's error on his 9th move is demonstrated. 16. P–Q6 would follow the Queen's retreat and on 15. . . . O–O White would reply 16. NxKBP! with a decisive attack.

The game ended in a now less spectacular manner:

11. . . . P–K4 12. PxP PxP 13. Q–Q6! QxN

13. . . . PxB would invite a beautiful blow: 14. N–Q5! PxN 15. PxPch with disastrous consequences for Black. The variation 13. . . . N–Q2 14. BxPch! KxB 15. N–N5ch K–K1 16. Q–K6ch would result in a mate.

14. KR–Q1

A transposition of moves is also possible: 14. BxPch KxB 15. RxPch! K–K1 16. KR–Q1 B–B3 17. BxP.

14. . . . N–Q2

If 14. . . . Q–R4 then 15. RxP! BxR 16. BxPch, etc.

15. BxPch KxB 16. N–N5ch K–K1 17. Q–K6ch, Black resigned.

There are particularly interesting QN2-pawn sacrifices that lead to prolonged high-powered struggles with chances for both sides.

Bled, 1931

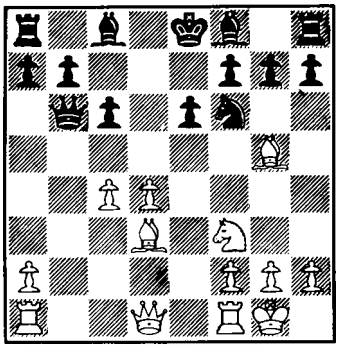
QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Alekhine *Colle*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 P–Q4 4. B–N5 QN–Q2 5. N–B3 P–B3 6. P–K4 PxKP 7. NxP Q–N3?

The good old "error of excessive appetite." Much stronger is 7. . . . B–N5ch 8. N–B3 O–O 9. B–Q3 P–B4 with wholesome counterplay for Black. For precisely this reason the latest theory gives preference to the modest 6. P–K3.

8. B–Q3! QxNP 9. O–O NxN 10. BxN N–B3 11. B–Q3 Q–N3.



The "trophy" has cost Black several tempos with the result that White has achieved obvious superiority in terms of both space and time: a lead in development, the QN-file, range for his Bishops, and a wealth of maneuvering possibilities. However, Black has developed no weaknesses as yet; the position is semiclosed and is further simplified somewhat by the exchange of Knights. It is no simple matter for White to gain additional advantage and cash in on it. An outwardly promising attempt to open play at once with 12. P–Q5 BPxP 13. BxN PxB 14. PxP actually yields no benefits. Hence a methodical building up of pressure is needed in anticipation of the forthcoming middlegame.

12. R–K1 B–K2 13. Q–B2 P–KR3 14. B–Q2!

A superlative maneuver, pure Alekhine. After Black castles, the White Bishop will occupy an ideal attacking position on QB3.

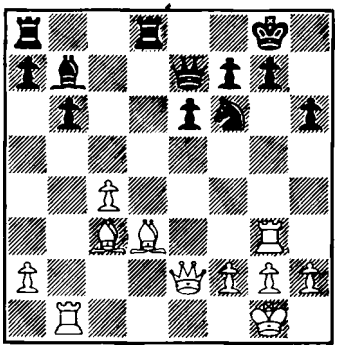
14. . . . P–B4

The only chance of exhibiting "activity," but with the upshot of opening up the game from which only White stands to benefit. But was there any alternative? After 14. . . . O–O 15. B–B3 P–B4 very strong is 16. P–Q5, and on 15. . . . B–Q2 16. N–K5! getting set for a direct attack.

15. B–B3 PxP 16. NxP O–O 17. N–B5! Q–Q1 18. NxBch QxN 19. QR–N1!

Preventing the development of the QB and threatening 20. B–N4.

19. . . . R–Q1 20. R–K3! P–QN3 21. Q–K2 B–N2 22. R–KN3



Black has finally completed his development, but dark clouds have gathered over his King. There is hardly any stopping White's attack. The two harmonious Bishops look very impressive, especially the one on QB3 that faces no opposition. A classic case of the advantage of two Bishops! And Alekhine was a past master with this weapon.

22. . . . N–K1 (22. . . . RxB? 23. BxN) **23. R–K1 K–B1 24. Q–N2!**

Forcing a decisive weakening of Black's already rickety Kingside fortress.

24. . . . P–B3 25. B–N4 N–Q3 26. R/N–K3 K–B2 27. P–B4!

The threat to capture the KP is more menacing than the capture itself.

27. . . . Q–Q2 28. Q–K2! R–K1 29. Q–R5ch K–N1 30. Q–N6

White's forces have crept up close to the Black King. The denouement is near at hand.

30. . . . P–B4 31. BxN QxB 32. BxP QxP 33. Q–R7ch K–B1 34. B–N6 Q–Q5 35. BxR RxB 36. K–R1 Q–B3, and Black resigned.

This game is an unsurpassed example of positional attack. The lead in development White gained by sacrificing his QNP was gradually transformed into a powerful Kingside attack. Alekhine made no attempt to refute Black's hazardous strategy at all costs in a few moves since the position did not justify such a plan. What he did instead was to play over the entire board, obstructing as best

he could the development of his opponent's pieces and slowly preparing the decisive storming of Black's castled position.

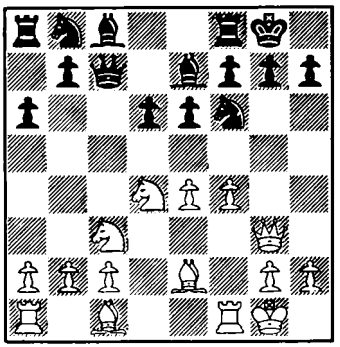
And here is a more up-to-date game played in the same vein.

Moscow, 1964

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Stein *Korchnoi*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. B–K2 P–K3 7. O–O B–K2 8. P–B4 Q–B2 9. Q–K1 O–O 10. Q–N3



A familiar variation with White striving for a Kingside attack while Black plays in the center and on the Queenside. However, the Q–N3 maneuver is usually preceded by B–K3. The unorthodox sequence of moves selected by Stein enables Black to win the pawn on QN2, taking advantage of the "hanging" Knight on Q4.

10. . . . Q–N3!? 11. B–K3 QxP 12. B–B2 Q–N5

Black has accomplished his mission, having lost but one tempo. But what a tempo! White had enough time to prepare the classic P–K5 breakthrough which heralds a sharp attack, whereas in the Sicilian Defense Black usually manages to foil or defuse this breakthrough.

13. P–K5! PxP 14. PxP N–K1

But not 14. . . . KN–Q2 due to 15. N–Q5! PxN 16. N–B5 P–KN3 17. P–QR3 Q–R4 18. NxBch, and also not 14. . . . N–Q4 because of 15. N–B5.

15. B–Q3!

White launches a methodical preparation for a Kingside attack.

15. . . . Q–R4 16. N–K4 N–Q2 17. N–KB3 P–KN3?

This is, in all likelihood, a decisive error, irremediably weakening the KB3-square. 17. . . . P–B4 18. PxP N/QxP 19. N/B–Q2! promises chances for both sides.

18. B–Q4 N–N2 19. N–B6ch BxN 20. PxB N–R4 21. Q–R4 Q–Q1

The defense is not made easier by 21. . . . P–K4 in view of 22. Q–N5! N/RxP 23. NxKP NxN 24. QxN/6. For this reason Black decided to eliminate at once the chief enemy—the pawn on B6. But too late: the attack is already irresistible.

22. QR–K1! N/QxP 23. N–N5 P–K4 24. BxKP P–R3 25. BxN

Perfectly sufficient to win, but still stronger is 25. RxN! PxN 26. QxP NxR 27. BxN winning.

25. . . . PxN 26. QxP NxB 27. RxN Q–Q5ch 28. K–R1 Q–KN5 29. Q–R6 B–B4 30. P–KR3 Q–Q5

Nothing is changed by 30. . . . Q–N5 given 31. R–KB1 BxB 32. PxB with the threat of bringing the Rook at KB1 into the attack.

31. RxB! PxR 32. R–K3 Q–N2 33. Q–R4 Q–R8ch 34. K–R2 KR–K1 35. R–N3ch

After a systematic twenty-move preparation, White succeeds in getting at his opponent's King.

35. . . . K–B1 36. Q–R6ch K–K2 37. R–K3ch K–Q2 38. BxPch, and Black resigned soon afterwards.

The sacrifice of the pawn on KN2 which occurs in a number of opening systems leads to a no less sharp and substantive play, though more often than not this pawn proves even less "edible" for the Black Queen than the pawn on QN2. Let us first consider

a couple of edifying examples which have been included in the theory of openings.

Correspondance, 1922

SICILIAN DEFENSE

L. Steiner — *Csabay*

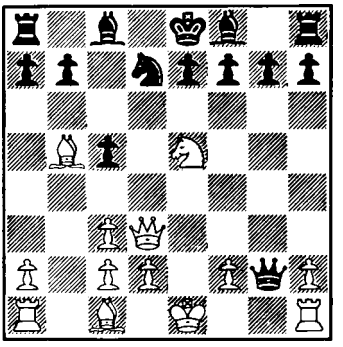
1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–KB3 3. N–B3 P–Q4?! 4. PxP NxP 5. N–K5!? NxN 6. NPxN Q–Q4!?

A premature spurt, but at the time the move was regarded as acceptable. Stronger is 6. . . . N–Q2! If then 7. B–N5 Q–B2, but not 7. . . . P–QR3 in view of 8. Q–B3! P–B3 9. Q–R5ch.

7. B–N5ch N–Q2

Unpleasant, but 7. . . . N–B3 is better still.

8. Q–K2! QxP? 9. Q–Q3!!



The whole point of White's brilliant scheme: sacrificing the Rook, he pounces on Black's defenseless King.

9. . . . QxRch 10. K–K2 P–K3

Many years later, in Czerniak–Cordovil (Nice Olympiad 1974), Black used the innovative 10. . . . K–Q1 but succumbed even faster: 11. NxPch K–B2 12. Q–N3ch P–K4 13. P–KB3!!, and Black resigned in view of the loss of his Queen.

11. BxNch K–K2 12. BxB RxB

Also futile is 12. . . . Q–Q4 13. QxQ PxQ 14. BxNP R–K1 15. B&P, etc.

13. Q–Q7ch K–B3

The Black King sets off on his last journey.

14. QxBPch KxN 15. P–Q4ch K–Q4 16. QxNPch R–B3 17. P–B4ch KxBP 18. B–K3!

Black capitulated in view of 18. . . . QxR 19. Q–N3 mate.

Moscow, 1952

SLAV DEFENSE

Rovner *Novotelnov*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–QB3 3. N–QB3 P–K3 4. P–K4!?

In the early fifties this gambit system enjoyed wide popularity. Today it is almost forgotten since 3. . . . P–K3 is a very rare move.

4. . . . PxKP 5. NxP B–N5ch 6. B–Q2 QxP 7. BxB QxNch 8. B–K2!

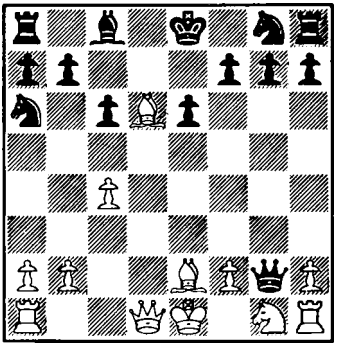
The sacrifice of a pawn has brought White a spatial lead and strong pressure along the weakened diagonal QR3–KB8. Now Black is offered another pawn sacrifice which, if accepted, will only pour oil on the flame: 8. . . . QxNP? 9. B–KB3 Q–N3 10. N–K2 N–QR3 11. B–R3 N–K2 12. R–KN1 (Black's position is open to crossfire) 12. . . . Q–B3 13. N–B3 N–KB4 14. N–K4 Q–Q1 15. RxP! with an advantage (Wood–Alexander, London 1948).

8. . . . N–QR3 9. B–Q6

In the celebrated Bronstein–Kotov game, Candidates Tournament 1950, both sides took turns sacrificing their NPs, but the decisive advantage accrued to White: 9. B–B3 N–K2 10. BxP R–KN1 (if 10. . . . QxNP, then 11. B–B6!! QxR 12. Q–Q6 O–O 13. Q–N3ch! N–N3 14. B–KB3, winning the opponent's Queen) 11. B–QB3 QxNP 12. Q–Q2! QxR 13. O–O–O N–Q4 14. N–B3 QxRch

(14. . . . Q–N7 15. PxN PxP 16. Q–B4 is also in White's favor) 15. BxQ.

9. . . . QxNP?



Having avoided the wily trap on the previous move, Black yields to the temptation of sinking his teeth into the pawn.

10. Q–Q2! B–Q2

Bad is 10. . . . QxR due to 11. Q–N5! with the threats of 12. QxNP and 12. B–B3.

11. O–O–O O–O–O 12. P–B5!

A move that decides the outcome of the game.

12. . . . B–K1 13. BxN QxR 14. Q–R5 R–Q2 15. B–K2. Black resigned.

The Queen's expedition after remote prey such as an NP, unless thoroughly thought out, is likely to lead it to an inglorious death.

MOSCOW CHAMPIONSHIP

Moscow, 1962

CENTER COUNTER DEFENSE

Shamkovich — *I. Zakharov*

1. P–K4 P–Q4 2. PxP QxP 3. N–QB3 Q–QR4

Black has chosen an ancient, showy opening in which his Queen is ostentatiously brought into play as early as the 3rd move, pre-

senting the opponent with a gift of a tempo. Clearly, such a tactic calls for supreme caution.

4. P–Q4 N–KB3 5. N–B3 B–N5 6. P–KR3 B–R4?

A well-known error in the opening. Correct is 6. . . . BxN 7. QxB P–B3.

7. P–KN4 B–N3 8. N–K5 P–B3

Forced by the threat of N–B4.

9. P–KR4

Exploiting the Bishop's poor position on N3—the threats are B–Q2 and P–R5.

9. . . . B–K5 10. N–B4 Q–B2 11. NxB NxN 12. Q–B3 N–B3 13. B–B4

By attacking the Queen White wins the third tempo in a row.

13. . . . Q–Q2 14. P–N5

Emphasizing that more troubles are in store for the Black Queen: on 14. . . . N–Q4 comes 15. BxN! RxB 16. N–K5 Q–K3 17. B–R3 and White wins.

14. . . . Q–Q4

Actually heroics of necessity: completely bad is 14. . . . N–N1 15. BxN RxB 16. N–K5 Q–Q4 17. QxQ PxQ 18. B–N5ch.

15. Q–QN3!

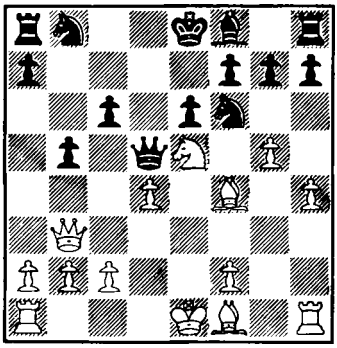
By attacking the pawn on QN7, White avoids the exchange of Queens.

15. . . . P–N4

After 15. . . . QxR 16. QxP Black loses his entire Queenside.

16. N–K5 P–K3

If 16. . . . QxR, White continues QxPch K–Q1 18. PxN Q–K5ch 19. B–K3 KPxP 20. O–O–O! with a very strong attack. The exchange of Queens with 16. . . . QxQ 17. RPxQ is also bad since it leads to serious weaknesses of Black's Queenside position.



17. PxN! QxR 18. N–B3

The trap has closed with a bang.

18. . . . PxP 19. O–O–O B–K2 20. B–R2

White has no intention of paying anything more than a Rook for Black's Queen.

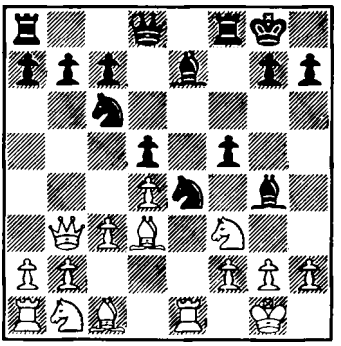
20. . . . B–B1 21. Q–Q3 B–R3ch 22. K–N1 N–R3 23. P–B3 R–Q1 24. B–R3

Completing the hunting operation.

24. . . . N–B4 25. Q–K2 QxRch 26. QxQ, and Black soon resigned.

An interesting discussion arose around the sacrifice of the NQP in the old variation of the Petroff Defense which was encountered in the sixth game of the Karpov–Korchnoi match in 1974.

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–KB3 3. NxP P–Q3 4. N–KB3 NxP 5. P–Q4 P–Q4 6. B–Q3 B–K2 7. O–O N–QB3 8. R–K1 B–KN5 9. P–B3 P–B4!? 10. Q–N3 O–O



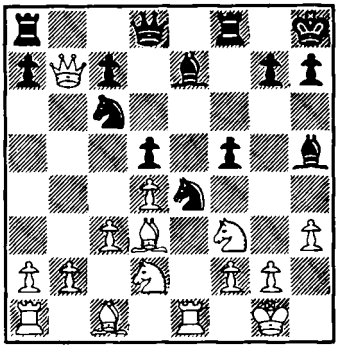
Black's position, rather active but visibly weakened by 9. . . . P–B4, does not lend itself to unambiguous characterization. The threat to the NP is still fictitious: 11. QxP? R–B3! 12. Q–N3 (12. QN–Q2 is bad due to 12. . . . R–N1 13. Q–R6 N–N5 or 13. . . . NxQP) 12. . . . BxN 13. PxB R–N3ch 14. K–B1 R–N1 15. Q–B2 Q–Q2! with an excellent attacking position for Black; for instance, 16. PxN BPxP 17. BxP Q–R6ch! 18. K–K2 PxB or 16. B–KB4 R–K1 17. N–Q2 B–R5! 18. B–N3 P–B5! At the same time, the threat of 11. . . . BxN is unpleasant enough, as is borne out by Lasker–Pillsbury, St. Petersburg 1895: 11. B–KB4 BxN 12. PxB N–N4 13. K–N2 Q–Q2 14. Q–B2 N–K3! 15. B–QB1 B–Q3 with an attack for Black. Could White simply withdraw his KN creating a dangerous threat of P–B3? Since 11. N–K5 NxN 12. PxN N–B4 bodes ill for White, the only alternative is 11. KN–Q2. That was exactly the move used by Ljubojevic against Makarichev, Amsterdam 1975, but it was followed by 11. . . . NxBP! 12. KxN B–R5ch 13. P–N3 P–B5! 14. K–N2, PxP 15. B–K4 (15. PxP BxP! 16. KxB Q–Q3ch, etc.) 15. . . . B–R6ch! 16. K–N1 PxPch and White soon had to capitulate. Interestingly, the Knight sacrifice as a way to refute 11. KN–Q2 was pointed out by Schlechter eighty years ago.

Karpov resorted to a different strategy:

11. QN–Q2 K–R1 12. P–KR3 B–R4

And only at this point does he capture the pawn.

13. QxNP!?



This crucial position gives rise to the hottest controversy since Korchnoi failed to refute the White Queen's daring raid. The game continued **13. . . . R–B3 14. Q–N3 R–N3,** but after White's weighty reply **15. B–K2!** Black's counterattack came to a dead end. The threat is 16. N–K5! largely facilitated by the awkward position of the Rook on N3 and the Bishop on R4. 15. . . . NxKBP 16. KxN B–R5ch does not work in view of 17. K–B1 BxR 18. NxB. There followed **15. . . . B–R5 16. R–B1 BxN 17. NxB BxPch? 18. RxB NxR 19. KxN Q–Q3 20. N–N5!** and White goes on a decisive counteroffensive.

Numerous analysts tried to strengthen Black's hand. Of all such attempts D. Bronstein's recommendation merits the most serious consideration: 13. . . . N–R4 14. Q–N5 P–B4! By attacking the White center Black simultaneously creates a crisp threat to the opponent's Queen: 15. . . . B–K1! 16. Q–R6 R–B3. It seems that Black can thereby obtain fully equal counterchances. Small wonder: the sacrifice of the pawn brings Black a considerable edge in development and a rather active deployment of his pieces. Those readers who wish to verify and refine Bronstein's recommendation are well advised to concentrate, first and foremost, on the following variations: 15. P–QN4 PxNP 16. PxP N–B5 and 15. B–K2 B–K1 16. Q–Q3 N–QB3.

* * *

The many examples given above amply demonstrate how fatal an unjustified loss of time can be. Violation of the principle of development is fraught with danger above all in those openings in which skirmishes begin early in the game, whether the opening is classified as open, semiopen, or closed: this classification is

strictly conventional. For instance, in the Tchigorin system of the Ruy Lopez (classified as an "open" game) positions with unbroken pawn chains often arise, whereas some variations of the Queen's Gambit (a "closed" game) feature fierce combinational clashes in the spirit of classical gambits.

Clearly, it is precisely in the latter case that the slightest loss of time may prove disastrous, whereas the Tchigorin system tolerates involved and dilatory—even "antidevelopmental"—maneuvers (for instance, Breyer's 9. . . . N–N1). Therefore, in assessing the relative merits of opening strategies, we always have to reckon with their true nature. Ultimately, the success of a developing sacrifice depends on many factors: the size of the lead in development brought by the sacrifice; the mobility of the as yet uncommitted pieces; the positional weaknesses, if any, in the opponent's camp, and so on. Psychological motivation is also a powerful factor, as it is in all phases of the game.

The pawn serves as the most common form of sacrificial material, sort of the common denominator of the developing sacrifice. However, minimal though such sacrifices may be, they call for a particularly deep and accurate appraisal. "Minor sacrifices (merely pawns!) sometimes serve as a more lasting and accurate yardstick of a player's skill and talent than his ability to mate the opponent in five moves" (Mikhail Tchigorin).

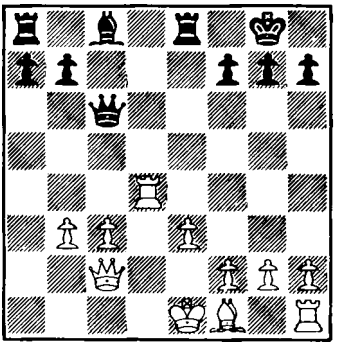
CHAPTER VII

The Preventive Sacrifice

The purpose of the preventive sacrifice is very specific: to keep the enemy King in the center, hampering castling. The next task for the more active side is to attack the King. In one sense, the preventive sacrifice is a clear manifestation and a special instance of the developing sacrifice. However, its specific nature and specialty techniques warrant an individual chapter.

Before reviewing and classifying preventive sacrifices, we must first determine the circumstances under which there is generally a point in trying to prevent castling. The rule of castling is the youngest of all universally accepted chess rules, though it dates back a good four centuries. At that time the royal majesty had a more difficult life than now: open games were played, defense was unpopular, and swashbuckling attacks at the King pinioned at the center led to victory. Castling came in very handy. With a graceful pirouette at the right moment the King instantaneously fled to the flank to greater safety, leaving the center open for piece maneuvering. This marvelous rule enriched chess. However, our chess forefathers, who had the stroke of genius to improve the game, perhaps did not even suspect that in some openings castling is not necessary at all. The cases in point are certain modern variations of the King's Indian Defense and other openings with a locked pawn center. There are a good many examples in which the center is not locked but is so well fortified that one can afford the luxury of leaving the King in place. Alternatively, if the position has

been appreciably simplified, the need for castling may likewise be gone.



This position arose in the seventh game of the Capablanca–Alekhine match of 1927. White has an extra pawn but lags somewhat behind in development, particularly with respect to castling. Nevertheless, White could castle by playing 19. P–K4 followed by B–K2 and O–O. "I had to make up my mind as to whether to advance the pawn to K4, trying to take the game along quieter lines, or to play 19. B–Q3, boldly going on the counter-offensive," wrote Capablanca. "I preferred 19. B–Q3, resulting in an extremely interesting game." Instead of gradually preparing for the traditional castling, Capablanca refrained from it altogether, returned the extra pawn, but launched an attack. There followed: **19. B–Q3! QxP 20. BxPch K–B1 21. B–K4 Q–R6 22. Q–Q2 B–K3 23. P–QB4 P–R4 24. R–N1! QxP 25. R–R1 Q–B2 26. Q–N2! Q–B4 27. B–Q5!** with a dangerous attack. The King in the center in no way prevented White from carrying out active operations. Comparative analysis confirms the soundness of this decision: if 19. P–K4 then 19. . . . B–K3 20. B–B4 QR–QB1 21. O–O P–QN4 22. BxB RxB and Black's initiative is adequate compensation for the pawn.

Therefore, both the castling operation and the measures to prevent it call for a very thoughtful and creative approach. Still, almost all modern open, semiopen, and even closed openings include castling on both sides as an organic part of the overall strategy. The preventive sacrifice is therefore a dangerous weapon in the hands of the attacker. It was especially widely used by the

old masters. The classical gambits popular at that time, namely the King's Gambit, the Evans Gambit, the Center Gambit, and the like, created marvelous opportunities for preventive sacrifices.

The Critical Diagonal

Certainly, the 150-year-old gambit of Captain Evans is the attacking idea incarnate, with the Bishop on QR3 playing the first fiddle.

Becks, 1862

EVANS GAMBIT

Steinitz *Pilgal*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 B–B4 4. P–QN4 BxP 5. P–B3 B–R4 6. O–O N–B3

This move is somewhat premature here. Stronger is Lasker's continuation 6. . . . P–Q3 7. P–Q4 B–N3.

7. P–Q4 PxP?

A fatal concession of the center and a loss of time.

8. B–R3! P–Q3 9. P–K5! PxP 10. Q–N3 Q–Q2

With a series of energetic moves White has driven his opponent into a very difficult position. The awkward Queen move falls short of easing Black's plight.

11. R–K1 Q–B4 12. B–N5! N–Q2

White threatens 13. RxPch, winning the Queen. On 12. . . . B–K3 13. Q–R4, Black loses a piece, contributing nothing to the defense of his King.

13. Q–Q5! B–N3 14. NxKP N–K2

And now an elegant mating combination with a Queen sacrifice.

15. NxN! QxQ 16. N–B6ch K–Q1 17. BxN mate.

However, even in this chess epoch, some openings systems, far more sound than in the olden days, feature the very same situation. The theme is timeless indeed!

Margate, 1937

QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE

Keres *Alexander*

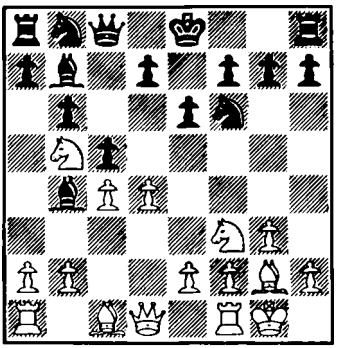
1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 B–N5 4. N–B3 P–QN3 5. P–KN3

The Nimzo-Indian Defense has transposed into one of the variations of the Queen's Indian. More energetic is 5. B–N5.

5. . . . B–N2 6. B–N2 Q–B1 7. O–O P–B4?

As Keres pointed out, this move must first be prepared by exchanging the QN. The English master forgot about the Q3-square!

8. N–QN5!



"This Knight, which has been neglected by Black, now exacts its terrible revenge." (Keres).

8. . . . PxP

Forced by the threats 9. N–Q6 and 9. P–QR3.

9. B–B4 N–R3

Now is the last opportunity for Black to castle, but then 10.

N–B7 would result in the loss of the Exchange without any compensation.

10. B–Q6!

Stronger than 10. N–Q6ch BxN 11. BxB N–K5, driving the dangerous Bishop back. "White gives up another pawn," Keres points out, "but in this position, this is of course of no consequence. His foremost task is to prevent his opponent's castling, and his last move is the best means to this end."

10. . . . QxP

Utterly without hope, Black casts prudence to the winds. However, the modest 10. . . . B–B4! would pose more serious problems for White. How is Black's King to be kept under "house arrest"? Problems of this sort are typical of preventive sacrifices. To solve it, the opponent must display tactical inventiveness. Neither 11. P–QR3 nor 11. Q–R4 gives White anything of substance. On 11. BxB QxB 12. P–QR3 there would follow 12. . . . O–O 13. P–QN4 Q–K2 and Black's main difficulties are put behind.

Keres has shown a clever and convincing variation giving White a decisive advantage, but the variation hinges on the sacrifice of yet another pawn whereby White gains an important tempo: 10. . . . B–B4 11. P–QN4! NxP 12. N–K5! BxB 13. KxB! (but not 13. N–B7ch because of 13. . . . QxN! 14. BxQ BxR 15. QxB R–QB1 16. Q–N2 P–Q4 and Black receives a huge amount of material for his Queen) 13. . . . N–R3 (or 13. . . . Q–N2ch 14. P–B3 threatening BxB and N–Q6ch) 14. Q–Q3! and Black is helpless. The threat of 15. Q–B3 followed by 16. BxB is irresistible.

Now a pretty concluding attack follows whose chief motif is the constrained position of the Black King . . . and the inordinate "activeness" of the Queen.

11. Q–R4! B–B3 (defending against the threat 12. QR–B1) **12. N/3xP QBxB 13. QxN!**

The decisive tactical stroke: it threatens N–B7ch, winning the Queen, and also KxB. Black tries his last chance.

13. . . . BxR 14. RxB!

If 14. N–B7ch QxN 15. BxQ B–KR6, Black can resist longer.

14. . . . QxN/5

Desperation. 14. . . . R–QB1 does not work in view of 15. BxB.

15. NxQ BxB 16. N–N5 K–K2 17. R–Q1 B–B4 18. P–QR3 N–K5

18. . . . K–B1 cannot save Black in view of 19. P–QN4 B–K2 20. Q–N7 or 18. . . . P–Q4 19. P–QN4 B–Q3 20. Q–N7ch N–Q2 21. NxP!, etc.

19. RxPch K–B3 20. Q–N7. Black resigned.

Here is another, fresher example of the same theme.

Moscow, 1971

FRENCH DEFENSE

Tal *Uhlmann*

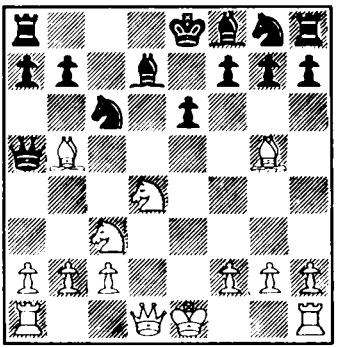
1. P–K4 P–K3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–Q2 P–QB4 4. KN–B3 N–QB3 5. B–N5 QPxP?

The exchange helps White to develop his pieces fast. Preferable is 5. . . . B–Q3 or 5. . . . BPxP 6. NxP B–Q2.

6. NxP B–Q2 7. B–N5!

Free and easy development à la Morphy. Black's reply is forced: both 7. . . . P–B3 and 7. . . . N–B3 are very bad due to 8. BxKN PxB 9. PxP Q–R4ch 10. Q–Q2 QxB 11. NxPch, etc.

7. . . . Q–R4ch 8. N–B3 PxP 9. NxP



White has achieved a considerable lead in development. However, the Black camp is without appreciable weaknesses so he still has a chance to finish his development little by little.

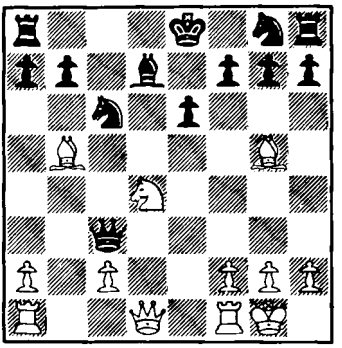
9. . . . B–N5?!

However, this move and the plan associated with it are too optimistic and give White a strong attack. Uhlmann recommended 9. . . . B–K2! 10. B–K3 Q–B2 with satisfactory play. Tal remarked that he had planned to play 10. Q–Q2 N–B3 11. O–O–O, but in that case, too, after 11. . . . O–O! Black had nothing to fear (12. N–N3 Q–N3! 13. BxKN BxB 14. QxB? QR–Q1 leads to the loss of the Queen). Strongest perhaps is to strive for simplification: 10. BxN! and now after both 10. . . . BxB/6 11. NxB PxN 12. Q–B3 R–B1 13. B–Q2 and 10. . . . PxB 11. BxB NxB 12. O–O, White has a slight but indisputable positional advantage due to the opponent's weak Queenside.

10. O–O! BxN

Pursuing the erroneous strategy: Black exchanges the Bishop so vital to the defense of his shaky position. However, after 10. . . . N–B3 11. BxKN PxB 12. N–K4 B–K2 13. R–K1 or 13. Q–R5!? White's threats are highly dangerous.

11. PxB QxBP?!



One thing cannot be denied: Uhlmann is consistent. He later recommended 11. . . . P–QR3 12. BxN BxN 13. NxB QxB 14. Q–Q6 N–K2 15. P–KB4? N–B4!, but Tal strengthened this variation: 15.

KR–Q1! NxN (of course, absolutely not 15. . . . PxN?? 16. Q–Q7ch and mate in two moves) 16. Q–Q7ch K–B1 17. QxNP with a great advantage for White.

12. N–B5!

A classic preventive sacrifice of the Knight, clearing the avenue of approach to the enemy King for White's pieces.

12. . . . PxN 13. R–K1ch B–K3 14. Q–Q6! P–QR3 15. B–Q2!

This brilliant maneuver of the Bishop, beefing up the White army along the critical diagonal, decides the outcome of the game in several moves.

15. . . . QxP 16. B–N4 PxB 17. Q–B8ch K–Q2 18. KR–Q1ch K–B2 19. QxR, Black resigned.

By pinning the enemy King down in the center with the aid of this classic technique, the active side is sometimes capable of mounting a very dangerous attack even in a simplified position or after a number of exchanges, although in the latter case the defensive potential should be assessed with the ultmost thoroughness (the Botvinnik–Petrosian game discussed in the preceding chapter, is an example of successful defense).

Riga, 1959

GRÜNFELD DEFENSE

Spassky *Witkowski*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–KN3 3. N–QB3 P–Q4 4. PxP NxP 5. P–K4 NxN 6. PxN B–N2

In this most fundamental of all opening variations, White acquires a pawn advantage and good prospects for a central attack. Black has to counterattack his opponent's pawn fortress.

7. B–QB4 P–QB4 8. N–K2 PxP 9. PxP N–B3 10. B–K3 P–QN4?

A premature burst of activity serving only to seriously undermine the strength of the QB4-square, which is ultimately to play

the decisive role in the outcome. A well-tested continuation is 10. . . . O–O 11. O–O B–N5 12. P–B3 N–R4!

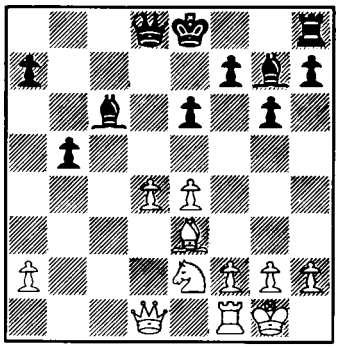
11. B–Q5

Certainly not 11. BxNP in view of 11. . . . Q–R4ch 12. N–B3 QxNch 13. B–Q2 QxP 14. BxNch B–Q2, with Black leaving all difficulties behind.

11. . . . B–Q2 12. R–QB1 R–QB1 13. O–O P–K3?

Fearing the loss of the pawn after 13. . . . O–O 14. BxB RxB 15. RxR BxR 16. P–Q5 B–Q2 17. BxP, Black commits a fatal error. Incidentally, in this variation, the continuation 17. . . . Q–R4 18. B–B5 QxP 19. BxP R–K1 would have given Black excellent counterplay, in which case Spassky would definitely have played simply 17. Q–Q2, retaining his positional edge.

14. BxN RxB 15. RxR BxR



16. P–Q5! PxP 17. Q–B2 Q–Q2 18. B–B5!

A stop sign! All attempts to safeguard the King and spring the Rook out of confinement are now doomed to failure. Here is an approximate variation: 18. . . . P–B3 19. N–B4! K–B2 20. PxP B–N2 (or 20. . . . BxP 21. R–Q1 R–K1 22. P–N3 R–K4 23. RxB RxR 24. Q–N3) 21. Q–N3 R–K1 22. P–Q6ch K–B1 23. Q–KR3!! winning.

18. . . . PxP

Black captures a second pawn which is, alas, a comfort but not a cure. White has kept intact the minimum of combat troops

sufficient to mount a decisive attack. Actually White is to enjoy the advantage of an extra Rook.

19. R–Q1 Q–N2 20. N–Q4 B–K4

On 20. . . . B–Q2 21. N–N3 P–B4 the simplest reply is 22. B–N4! with numerous threats.

21. B–N4 BxN

21. . . . B–Q2 would evoke 22. Q–B5.

22. RxB P–QR4

An attempt to lure the White Bishop away from the fatal diagonal. According to Spassky, the easiest path to victory is 23. Q–B5 P–B3 24. BxP K–B2 25. R–Q6 R–B1 26. B–B3! The "color opposition" only adds fuel to the fire of White's attack: the strike forces will move along the weakened dark squares, as the opponent's Bishop watches helplessly from the wings. Spassky made a more or less poor move, 23. B–B5, but won nonetheless.

In the following game, the urge to keep the enemy King in the center is the leitmotif of Black's attack throughout, right to the endgame.

Lugano, 1968

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE

Donner *Portisch*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–KN3 3. N–QB3 B–N2 4. P–K4 P–Q3 5. B–K2 O–O 6. B–N5 P–B4 7. P–Q5 P–K3 8. N–B3 P–KR3 9. B–K3

If 9. B–R4, then 9. . . . P–KN4 10. B–N3 PxP 11. KPxP N–R4 exchanging the Bishop on N3. This variation leads to double-edged play.

9. . . . PxP 10. BPxP P–QN4!

A well-known flank strike with a view to seizing the initiative while the White King is in the center. Encountered in a number

of variations in Indian and King's Indian Defenses, it is often associated with a pawn sacrifice, as in this instance.

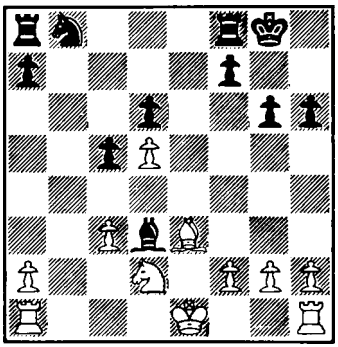
11. BxNP NxKP 12. NxN Q–R4ch 13. N–B3?

White has been definitely overcome by the desire to exchange the "terrible" Bishop on N2, thereby depriving the KRP of its defender. However, better is 13. Q–Q2 QxB 14. NxP QxP 15. R–QB1.

13. . . . BxNch 14. PxB QxB

So, the preventive mechanism is triggered by this move, though the critical diagonal is controlled by the Queen rather than the customary Bishop. But the latter will soon relieve the Queen of its duties. Can White take the pawn on R6? On 15. BxRP there follows 15. . . . R–K1ch 16. B–K3 B–R3! 17. N–Q2 Q–Q6 and White has nothing better (18. . . . RxBch is threatened) than to return the pawn—18. P–QB4 BxP 19. NxB QxN. But even in this case Black's position is better due to the weakness of the QP. Naturally, the Dutch grandmaster prefers to exchange Queens first.

15. Q–N3 B–R3 16. QxQ BxQ 17. N–Q2 (threatening 18. P–QB4) **17. . . . B–Q6!**



A paradoxical decision rooted in a profound evaluation of the position. In spite of the exchange of Queens, Black sacrifices a pawn to keep the enemy King in the center! This concept would seem to be out of place in the endgame, and yet it is completely justified: (*a*) the White King chained to K1 disjoins his Rooks, whereas

Black's Rooks will sooner or later invade the seventh rank; and (*b*) the weak QP is bound to fall prey to the Black Knight.

18. BxRP R–K1ch 19. K–Q1 N–Q2 20. R–QB1 N–N3 21. R–K1

A bitter admission: 21. P–QB4 (clearly planned in advance) is followed by 21. . . . N–R5! and White is helpless in the face of 22. . . . N–N7 mate (22. N–N3 N–N7ch 23. K–Q2 R–K7 mate).

21. . . . RxRch 22. KxR R–K1ch 23. B–K3 P–B4!

The only move! On 23. . . . NxP 24. N–B3 White finds it much easier to conduct defense.

24. N–B3 P–KB5 25. K–Q2 P–B5! 26. BxN

Forced: after 26. BxP R–K7ch 27. K–Q1 N–R5, White is mated.

26. . . . R–K7ch 27. K–Q1 PxB 28. R–N1 RxBP

Black has seized the seventh rank and now gathers the fruit.

29. RxP RxNP 30. K–K1 R–K7ch! 31. K–Q1 RxQRP 32. K–K1 (. . . B–K7ch was again threatened) **32. . . . R–K7ch 33. K–Q1 R–KB7 34. N–N5 P–B6** and the KBP quickly decided the outcome of the struggle.

This game demonstrates particularly vividly the organic connection of the opening with the middlegame and even the endgame. Thus, what is specifically an opening concept comes in very handy as late as the concluding stage of the game.

All too clear from the above examples is that the seizure of the critical diagonal by the Bishop is but the first step of the preventive operation. The success of the ensuing attack depends on how fast the attacking pieces can be transferred to the decisive sector of the battle. Of course, alongside objective factors, psychological factors play a big, sometimes decisive, role, in particular the ability to conduct a level-headed and resourceful defense, making countersacrifices if necessary. Vacillation and hackneyed play in such circumstances are tantamount to defeat for both sides, the attacker and the defender.

The Magic Square

Another thematic sacrifice revolves around the K6-square. This magic square has the most attraction for the White minor pieces, the Knight or the Bishop. Having entrenched itself on this square by means of a sacrifice ("free" possession of the square is an extremely rare phenomenon), the daring piece disrupts the co-ordination of the enemy forces, preventing castling and setting the stage for a decisive attack.

Portoroz, 1958

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

Tal *Füster*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–QB3 PxP 4. NxP N–Q2 5. N–KB3

Sometimes, another, extremely high-powered plan is used at this point: 5. B–QB4 KN–B3 6. N–N5 P–K3 7. Q–K2. Curiosity lovers will recall Keres's miniature created in one of the international tournaments: 5. Q–K2 KN–B3?? 6. N–Q6 mate!

5. . . . KN–B3 6. NxNch NxN 7. B–QB4 B–B4 8. Q–K2 P–K3 9. B–KN5 B–K2 10. O–O–O

White has easily and naturally completed the development of his pieces, but Black has no grounds for complaint either: after 10. . . . O–O he has a harmonious and sufficiently solid position. There could follow 11. N–K5 N–K4 12. BxB QxB 13. P–KN4 B–N3 14. P–KR4 P–KR3! and the exchange on N3 opens the KB-file to Black's advantage. Füster, however, is wary of castling to the opposite-side, that source of tension, and tries to defuse the situation.

10. . . . P–KR3 11. B–R4 N–K5?

Black's idea is actually not totally devoid of reason: after 12. BxB, QxB nothing can stop him from castling on either side without the risk of coming under attack. Neither is 12. B–N3 dangerous. But White has yet a third possibility that Black did not foresee. . . .

To exonerate Black from part of the blame, I should mention that it was very difficult to foresee the reply that ultimately deprived Black of castling and gave White an extremely strong attack. However, in a given set of circumstances, general considerations should have suggested to Füster that 11. . . . N–K5 was a poor move: the Black King was still in the center and White had already deployed all his forces. Procrastination was fatal!

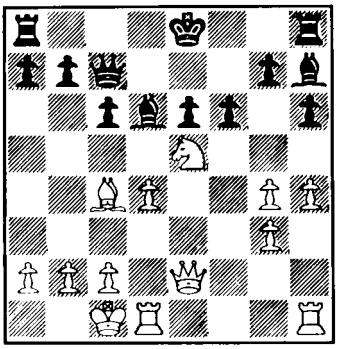
12. P–KN4! B–R2

Bad is 12. . . . BxB in view of 13. PxB NxP 14. PxP and White has a very strong attack for the exchange.

13. B–KN3 NxB 14. PxN!

Chess abounds in rules . . . and in about as many exceptions. One of the common rules stipulates that pawns should capture toward the center. But a deep and concrete evaluation of the position prompted Tal to violate the rule: to capture with the KBP, opening the line. Inasmuch as castling short is now actually extremely risky (14. . . . O–O 15. N–K5 Q–B2 16. P–KR4 QR–Q1 17. P–N5!), Black hastily prepares to castle long.

14. . . . Q–B2 15. N–K5 B–Q3 16. P–KR4 P–B3



The culmination of the opening skirmishes. Since Black is still in no position to take advantage of his right to castle (16. . . . O–O–O 17. NxKBP! or 16. . . . O–O 17. P–N5!), he decides to chase the gadfly away. If the importunate Knight is withdrawn, White's initiative is instantly gone (17. N–Q3 O–O–O! 18. BxPch K–N1). So what is to be done? The answer is clear: to execute a

preventive Knight sacrifice which entire course of White's preceding play has prepared.

17. BxP! PxN 18. PxP B–K2 19. KR–B1

The Black King is hopelessly mired in the center—and the Bishop on K6 will see to it that it does not move. White's task is to finalize his preparations for the decisive attack, and Tal splendidly rises to the occasion. First he ties his opponent down by threatening to invade with a Rook on Q7 and B7, and then, at the proper moment, he deals the fatal blow.

19. . . . R–KB1 20. RxRch BxR 21. Q–B3 Q–K2

21. . . . R–Q1? does not work because of 23. B–B7ch.

22. Q–N3! R–N1

Forced: 23. B–Q7ch was threatened. Bad is 22. . . . R–Q1 because of 23. B–B7ch. The position of the Rook on N1 allows an elegant decisive combination.

23. B–Q7ch! QxB 24. RxQ KxR 25. Q–B7ch B–K2 26. P–K6ch!

The crux of White's combination: on 26. . . . K–Q3 there follows 27. Q–B4ch winning the Rook.

26. . . . K–Q1 27. QxP, Black resigned

If 27. . . . B–K5, the game is decided by 28. Q–K5 with a double attack.

An equally ominous threat to Black is presented by the White Knight's seizing the K6-square with the support of other pieces. This variation is particularly typical of some Sicilian systems whereby the Bishop is moved to QB4.°

Here are a couple of examples from the Najdorf System.

° These problems are dealt with in greater detail by D. N. Levy in *Sacrifices in the Sicilian.*

Leningrad, 1951

Nezhmetdinov *NN*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. B–N5 QN–Q2?! (once a fashionable system) **7. B–QB4!**

A very strong move which, as extensive practice has shown, makes it exceedingly difficult for Black to prevent the eventual sacrifice of the piece on K6.

7. . . . P–K3 8. O–O P–N4? 9. BxKP! PxB 10. NxKP Q–N3 11. N–Q5! NxN 12. QxN B–N2 13. N–B7ch! QxN 14. Q–K6ch and mate on the next move.

U.S.S.R. TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

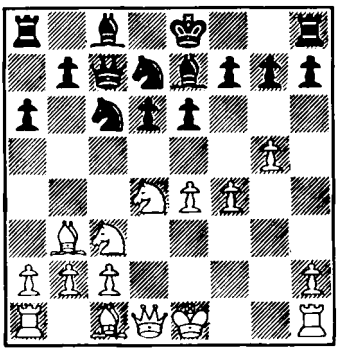
Leningrad, 1960

Stein *Chistyakov*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–KB3 3. N–QB3 P–Q3 4. P–Q4 PxP 5. NxP P–QR3 6. B–QB4 Q–B2 7. B–N3 P–K3 8. P–B4 B–K2?

Black played the opening poorly, disregarding the central squares. 6. . . . Q–B2 was premature, and instead of 8. . . . B–K2 stronger is 8. . . . N–B3.

9. P–N4! N–B3 10. P–N5 N–Q2



11. BxP!

The soundness of this sacrifice is beyond doubt: White gets

three pawns for a piece, a strong base on Q5, and a lasting initiative.

11. . . . PxB 12. NxP Q–R4 13. NxPch K–B1 14. N–K6ch K–N1 15. Q–R5!

The course of the attack is clear and warrants no special comments.

15. . . . N–B1 16. NxN BxN 17. B–Q2 B–K3 18. N–Q5 BxN

Black sacrifices his Queen in desperation since 18. . . . Q–Q1 19. B–B3 leaves him no hope.

19. BxQ B–B2 20. Q–N4 NxB 21. O–O–O, and after fruitless resistance Black resigned.

A classic example of a powerful attack actively supported by the mighty Knight on K6 is set by the Steinitz–Bardeleben game to be discussed in Chapter IX.

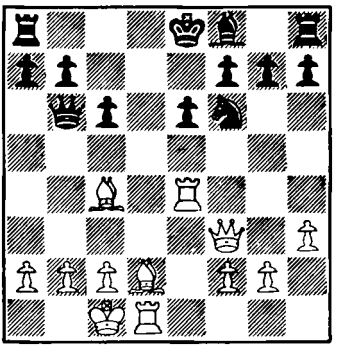
"The Tragedy of One Tempo . . ."

This peculiar definition of the chess game (Tartakower) invariably holds true at the peak of tension. Just picture this: one side is attacking, the other obstinately defending. The latter's King is in a difficult position and needs a move; a single tempo would allow the safety of castling. But at that moment, a preventive sacrifice dashes all the King's hopes for a quiet existence.

Here are several characteristic examples.

Moscow, 1951

Flohr



Boleslavsky

White is faced with a dilemma: to withdraw the Rook from K4, thereby admitting the folly of the pawn sacrifice (for example, 15. R/4–K1 O–O–O), or to sacrifice a piece and deprive the Black King of castling.

15. BxP!! PxB 16. RxPch B–K2

Boleslavsky demonstrated an interesting forced win on 16. . . . K–B2: 17. RxNch! PxR 18. Q–R5ch K–N1 (or 18. . . . K–K2 19. R–K1ch K–Q3 20. B–B4ch, etc.) 19. Q–N4ch K–B2 20. Q–B4ch K–N2 21. B–K3 Q–N5 22. R–Q7ch K–N3 23. Q–B7ch K–B4 24. P–QB3 Q–N4 25. P–N4ch K–K5 26. QxBP with a quick mate.

17. QR–K1!

A tactical subtlety that Flohr must have overlooked. After 17. . . . O–O 18. RxB, 18. . . . N–Q4 attacking the Queen and Rook does not work in view of 19. RxPch! KxR 20. B–B3ch NxB 21. R–K7ch K–R3 22. QxN with irresistible threats.

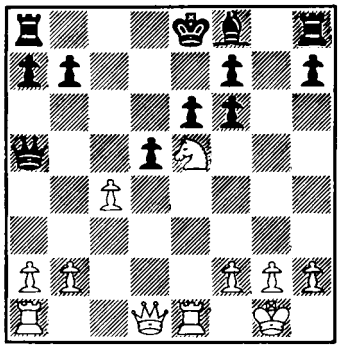
17. . . . N–Q4 18. B–N5 O–O–O 19. BxB NxB 20. RxN and White won thanks to the extra pawn and a better position.

Gorki, 1950

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

Nezhmetdinov *Kamishov*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. N–KB3 P–Q4 3. N–B3 N–B3(?) 4. P–K5 N–K5 5. N–K2! (Savitsky's interesting maneuver which on 5. . . . B–N5 continues with 6. N/3–N1! threatening P–B3) **5. . . . Q–N3 6. P–Q4 P–QB4 7. PxP QxBP 8. N/2–Q4 N–QB3 9. B–QN5! B–Q2 10. O–O!** (a splendid developing pawn sacrifice) **10. . . . NxKP 11. NxN BxB 12. NxB QxN 13. R–K1 N–B3 14. B–N5 P–K3 15. P–QB4!** (having achieved a huge lead in development, White tries to open lines) **15. . . . Q–R4 16. BxN PxB**



The sharp opening fight has reached its apogee. White has secured an impressive advantage, but if the Knight on K5 withdraws, 17. . . . O–O–O! follows and Black's troubles are over. The Black King must be made to remain in the center at all cost, even with a fresh sacrifice.

17. NxP!! KxN 18. Q–R5ch K–K2

On 18. . . . K–N1 the outcome of the game is decided with 19. Q–N4ch B–N2 20. QxPch K–B1 21. Q–Q6ch K–N1 22. R–K7.

19. PxP P–K4 20. P–B4! QxQP 21. PxP P–B4

Black does everything in his power to avoid the fatal opening of the center lines, but all is in vain—White's attack is irresistible.

22. P–K6 K–B3 23. P–KR4!

Surrounding the Black King.

23. . . . B–B4ch 24. K–R1 QxKP 25. Q–R6ch, Black resigns.

Opening systems in which Black, for a variety of strategic reasons, keeps his King in the center for a long time are not rare these days. However, in such a case one must be very cautious not to go too far or else a crushing sacrifice will almost invariably end the game.

Tuapse, 1967

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Dementiev — *I. Zakharov*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–KN3 3. P–Q4 B–N2 4. N–B3 PxP 5. NxP N–QB3 6. B–K3 N–B3 7. NxN NPxN 8. P–K5 N–N1

Now which is better for Black: a temporary lag in development in the hope of tying White down to the defense of the KP or a pawn sacrifice by 8. . . . N–Q4! 9. NxN PxN 10. QxP R–QN1 conducive to the rapid completion of his development? There is still no consensus among theoreticians as to which of these alternatives is stronger. Apparently both are good provided the plan is executed with high precision!

9. B–Q4 Q–R4?!

Just what we warned against: Black goes too far. Lagging behind in development, he should take immediate steps to safeguard his King, such as 9. . . . P–QB4 10. BxP Q–B2 11. B–Q4 BxP followed by . . . N–B3 and . . . O–O.

10. B–B4!

The edge in development mandates sacrificial tactics.

10. . . . BxP 11. O–O N–R3

Though tempting, not the best move. Stronger is 11. . . . N–B3 12. R–K1 P–Q3.

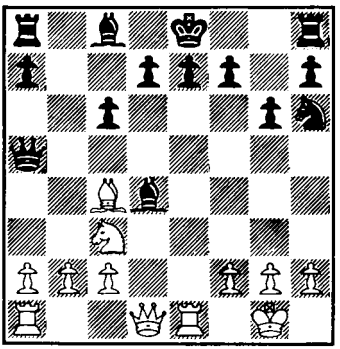
12. R–K1

White could punish Black for his mistake with 12. BxB QxB 13. R–K1 Q–N2 (if 13. . . . Q–QB4, . . . Q–B3, or . . . Q–KN4, then 14.

N–K4!; if 13. . . . Q–B2, then 14. Q–Q4 O–O 15. RxP N–B4 16. BxPch! RxB 17. R–K8ch R–B8 18. RxRch KxR 19. Q–R8ch K–B2 20. N–K4! with a decisive attack) 14. N–Q5! PxN 15. QxP R–QN1 16. Q–Q6 winning.

The text move is not so strong.

12. . . . BxB



"Now my opponent will capture the Bishop on Q4, I will castle and have excellent play a pawn up (13. QxB O–O, but not 14. RxP because of 14. . . . N–B4 15. BxPch RxB and White's attack is likely to go wrong)"—thus, or similarly, must master Zakharov have reasoned. But White's design proved much craftier than that.

13. RxPch!!?

An intermediate move of enormous power. By sacrificing the Rook White gets a strong attack. All the chinks in Black's armor begin to come to light.

13. . . . KxR 14. QxB P–Q4?

Believing that quiet defense no longer serves a useful purpose, Black decides on heroic countersacrifices. And yet after 14. . . . R–KN1! White would have a difficult time trying to prove the soundness of his plan. There could follow 15. Q–R4ch K–B1! 16. QxNch R–N2 and Black will probably be able to repulse White's attack. However, stronger is 15. N–K4! K–Q1 (15. . . . P–Q4 and 15. . . . N–B4 are both bad because of 16. Q–B6ch) 16. Q–B6ch K–B2 17. Q–B4ch K–Q1 (17. . . . K–N3? 18. P–QN4!), and now White has a draw but very likely not more.

15. QxR PxB 16. R–K1ch B–K3 (16. . . . K–Q2 17. Q–Q4ch) **17. QxR Q–B2 18. Q–R8 N–N5 19. QxP** and White won.

Of course, an opponent's sluggishness does not necessarily justify such bold actions. In many cases attempts to refute this tactic with a sacrifice have failed. Here is a middle-of-the-road instance in which the attack proved worthy of the counterattack.

Zurich, 1953

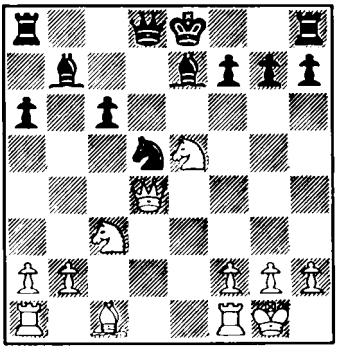
TARRASCH DEFENSE

Najdorf *Keres*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 P–Q4 4. N–B3 P–B4 5. BPxP BPxP!?

A well-known gambit continuation which gives Black good development after 6. Q–R4ch B–Q2 7. QxP PxP 8. NxP NxN 9. QxN N–B3. Is this gambit correct? Theory has no conclusive answer, but many players dislike the prospect of laborious defense necessitated by accepting the sacrifice. Najdorf preferred to deploy his pieces without further delay.

6. QxP PxP 7. P–K4 N–B3 8. B–QN5 P–QR3!? (A risky reply throwing Black somewhat back in development. Keres definitely recognized the danger in making this move.) **9. BxNch PxB 10. N–K5! B–N2 11. PxP** (worth considering is 11. B–N5 PxP 12. Q–QB4 or 11. . . . B–K2 12. PxP) **11. . . . NxP 12. O–O B–K2**



Black intends to castle after which his powerful Knight on Q5 would guarantee him reasonable chances. Being appreciably ahead in development, should not White try to disrupt his plan with a bold sacrifice?

13. NxQBP?!

Objectively stronger is the quiet positional continuation 13. N–K4 O–O 14. N–B5 with a certain advantage for White, but a spirited player like Najdorf finds it hard to proceed in such a manner voluntarily. Instead, a sharp, interesting struggle ensues with White holding the initiative. The bold piece sacrifice, however, will have one serious drawback: it galvanizes the QB.

13. . . . **BxN 14. QxP R–KB1 15. R–K1 Q–Q3 16. N–K4** and all of a sudden the players agreed to a draw.

As Bronstein related in his book *The Chess Struggle in Practice*, it turned out after the game that Najdorf had rejected the idea of exchanging on Q5 (16. NxN) on account of 16. . . . QxN, but he later found that after 17. B–B4 White had a decisive advantage. On 16. . . . BxN, in his opinion, a tremendous attack would follow: 17. B–N5 B–K3 (17. . . . P–B3? 18. B–B4 Q–Q2 19. QR–Q1) 18. QR–Q1 Q–QN5 19. B–R6. "In reply, Keres just smiled," notes Bronstein. On careful scrutiny, White's attack does not look all that terrible in view of 19. . . . R–Q1 20. QxRP RxR 21. RxR Q–N5! 22. P–B3 (or 22. Q–B2 R–N1 23. Q–B6ch B–Q2) 22. . . . Q–R4! 23. Q–K4 Q–B4ch and Black keeps the Rook on B1 and every possibility of successful defense. Could that be the reason Keres smiled?

The Unexpected Sacrifice

In the preceding examples, the preventive sacrifice inherently stemmed from the opening strategy. There is, however, an unexpected type of sacrifice having no organic connection with the opening system and exploding like a bomb as a result of concrete strategic or tactical errors of the opponent, such as the weakening of the King's position or unjustified tardiness in castling.

MATCH

New York, 1923

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

Marshall — *Ed. Lasker*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 P–QB4

The Tarrasch Defense, still used nowadays.

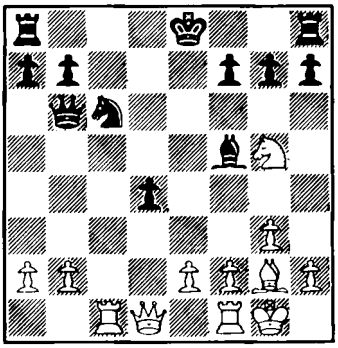
4. BPxP KPxP 5. N–B3 N–QB3 6. P–KN3 N–B3 7. B–N2 B–K3

Capablanca's move. Modern players prefer 7. . . . B–K2, striving for rapid Kingside development.

8. O–O B–K2 9. PxP BxP 10. B–N5 P–Q5

A risky continuation since White acquires a comfortable outpost in the center for his pieces. 10s . . . B–K2 is sounder.

11. BxN QxB 12. N–K4 Q–K2 13. NxB QxN 14. R–B1 Q–N3 15. N–N5 B–B4



In spite of Black's minor inaccuracies, his position does not look too dangerous: he will be able to castle on the next move. White can hardly exploit the weakness of the isolated QP (a usual theme in the Tarrasch Defense). At the proper time, this pawn threatens to advance to become an asset instead of the liability. But Marshall finds a clever and absolutely unexpected possibility of keeping the enemy King in the center. It is not for nothing that Tartakower called the American champion "a brilliant cavalry general of the Queen's Gambit."

16. P–K4! PxP e.p.?

Black is still blind to the lurking danger. 16. . . . B–N3 should have been played (but not 16. . . B–Q2 because of 17. Q–R5 P–N3 18. Q–R6).

17. RxN!! PxR 18. Q–Q6!

A mere two moves have brought about a striking metamorphosis on the board: the Black King, on the verge of escaping, has been grabbed by the coattails and faces a mortal blow: 19. BxPch. All of a sudden, Black is tottering on the brink of catastrophe.

18. . . . B–Q2 19. Q–K5ch K–B1 20. PxP!

The opening of the KB-file decides the game in a few moves.

20. . . . P–B3 21. RxPch! PxR 22. QxPch K–K1 23. QxRch K–K2 24. Q–K5ch K–Q1 25. P–KR4! K–B1 26. N–B7 P–QR4 27. N–Q6ch K–N1 28. N–N5ch

Marshall overlooked the opportunity to crown the game with an elegant finale: 28. N–B4ch Q–B2 29. N–N6!

28. . . . K–N2 29. N–Q6ch K–N1 30. Q–K7 Q–B2 31. Q–B8ch K–R2 32. N–N5ch K–N3 33. QxR KxN 34. B–B1ch, and Black soon resigned.

U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

Chicago, 1974

PETROFF DEFENSE

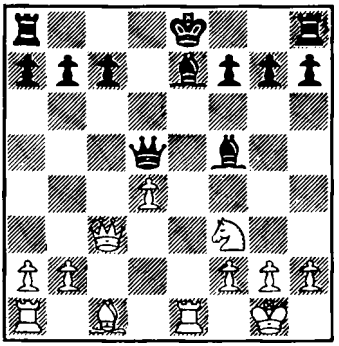
Browne *Bisguier*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–KB3 3. NxP P–Q3 4. N–KB3 NxP 5. P–Q4 P–Q4 6. B–Q3 B–K2 7. O–O N–QB3 8. P–B4

This move results in more lively play in the center than 8. R–K1 B–KN5 9. P–B3, as Karpov played against Korchnoi (see Chapter VI).

8. . . . N–N5?! (8. . . . B–KN5 is sounder) **9. PxP NxB 10. QxN**

QxP (10. . . . N–B3! is better) **11. R–K1 B–KB4 12. N–B3! NxN 13. QxN**



Black's position looks reliable enough: it only remains to prepare castling to leave all opening problems behind. How can this be prevented? There follows a natural move to reinforce the position.

13. . . . P–QB3? 14. B–R6!!

A staggering blow which comes as a total surprise to Black. It is aimed at creating threats along the K-file (to free the Queenside Rook) and establishing the White Queen's dominance over the entire diagonal.

14. . . . R–KN1

The underlying objective of White's plan is revealed by the variations 14. . . . PxB 15. R–K5 Q–Q2 16. QR–K1 B–K3 17. P–Q5 PxP 18. RxB! PxR 19. QxRch B–B1 20. Q–B6! and 14. . . . B–K4 15. BxP R–KN1 16. RxB! QxR 17. R–K1 with an advantage.

15. R–K5 Q–Q2 16. QR–K1 B–K3 17. N–N5! O–O–O

Black chooses the least of the evils, an unpromising Rook endgame. The variation 17. . . . PxB 18. NxB PxN 19. RxP R–N2 20. P–Q5! K–B1 21. QxRch! leads to immediate disaster, and 17. . . . BxN 18. BxB offers no bright prospects either because of the poor King position.

18. NxBP! BxN 19. RxB QxP 20. RxB! (a cold shower) **QxQ**

21. PxQ PxB 22. R–N1 R–N4 23. P–KR4 R–N4 24. RxR PxR 25. RxRP and White soon cashed in on his advantage.

Let us return now to the last diagram. The "natural" move 13. . . . P–QB3 proved a poor choice. But how should Black have played? Robert Byrne and Mednis recommended 13. . . . B–K3 so as to parry 14. QxP with 14. . . . B–Q3! with adequate compensation for the pawn. True, but much stronger is 14. R–K5 Q–Q2 15. P–Q5! BxP 16. B–N5! P–KB3 (if 16. . . . B–K3, then 17. BxB QxB 18. R–QB5! O–O–O 19. R–QB1 with obvious advantage) 17. QR–K1!! PxR 18. NxP (not a moment of respite for Black; weaker is 18. RxP due to 18. . . . O–O–O) with a powerful attack. Probably the strongest move is 13. . . . P–KB3, gaining control over the critical K4- and KN4-squares and providing a comfortable berth for the King on KB2.

The Explosive Sacrifice

Even in those instances in which the enemy King hides behind what looks like an impregnable wall of pawns, a piece sacrifice is often able to destroy the fortress and deprive the King of castling. This kind of sacrifice may be called an explosive preventive one. It is particularly characteristic of the Sicilian Defense. Let us discuss several graphic examples.

Budapest, 1950

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Keres *Kotov*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. B–K2 Q–B2

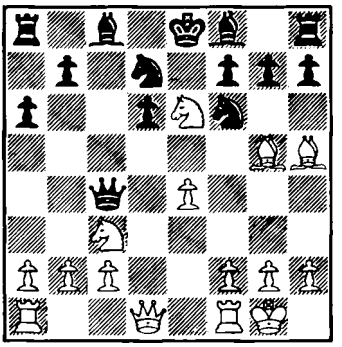
Played in the hope of obtaining a normal Scheveningen configuration after 7. B–K3, but Keres selects a sharper and more original plan of attack. Stronger is 6. . . . P–K4 or 6. . . . P–KN3.

7. B–N5 QN–Q2 8. O–O P–K3 9. B–R5!

An unexpected and very strong lunge, threatening 10. NxP; on 10. . . . N–B4 there would follow 11. BxN PxB 12. K–R1 followed

by P–B4. In this variation, the position of the Bishop on KR5 is very strong. Kotov defends the KP with the Queen, although the "ugly" 9. . . . P–KN3 is a shade better.

9. . . . Q–B5 10. NxP!!



An unusually surprising and shattering move. In his *100 Games*, Keres remarked:

> At first I thought that in view of the threat 10. . . . NxB and 11. . . . QxN, there was nothing better than to return the Bishop to K2 and repeat moves. But a deeper analysis of the position prompted an idea to sacrifice the Knight and launch an attack at the Black King stuck in the center. I based my decision on general principles rather than concrete calculations. Indeed, White is far ahead in development and Black faces a very hard time parrying the numerous threats. The further course of the game confirmed that I was right.

It should be added that the stunning Knight sacrifice was a success not only because of White's edge in development but also due to the worst possible position of the Black Queen on K3 and the organic weaknesses in the Black position.

10. . . . QxN/3 11. N–Q5!

The essence of White's idea. The threat of N–B7ch forces the King's next move. 11. . . . NxN 12. PxN Q–B4 would elicit, according to Keres, the following response: 13. Q–K1ch N–K4 14. P–KB4 P–R3 15. PxN QxB 16. PxPch, etc.

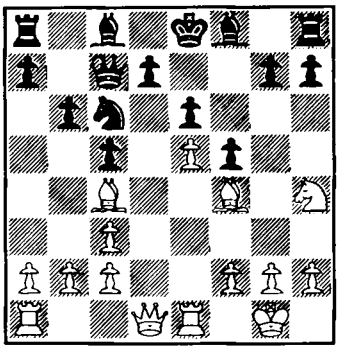
11. . . . K–Q1 12. B–N4!

The pin on the Knight allows White to win back the sacrificed material, and then some.

12. . . . Q–K4 13. P–KB4 QxKP 14. BxN BxB (or 14. . . . KxB 15. BxN) **15. NxN PxN 16. BxPch K–B2 17. BxR** and White won.

Tbilisi, 1967

Lein



Gurgenidze

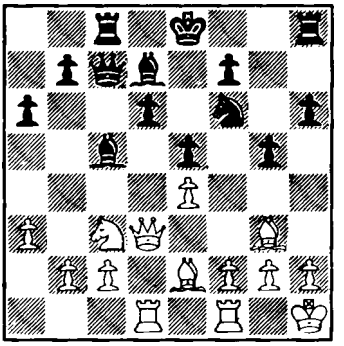
The Black King is sheltered by an odd pawn configuration. The threat 11. Q–R5ch seems a trifling matter to repulse: **10. . . . P–N3.** This was exactly the way Lein played only to find that what seemed a "natural" move in actuality proved to be an irreparable mistake (correct is 10. . . . N–K2!). White's reply: **11. NxBP!**

The double defense of the KBP is now revealed to be a total illusion. On 11. . . . KPxN there follows 12. P–K6! P–Q3 13. P–K7! BxP 14. BxP and on 11. . . . NPxN, of course, 12. Q–R5ch K–Q1 13. QR–Q1 with the irrevocable threat of BxP. The opposition of the Rook on K2 with the King on K1 and the Bishop on KB4 with the Queen on B2 serves as a tactical basis for a simple but elegant combination by White.

11. . . . N–R4 12. B–Q5! B–QN2 (if 12. . . . PxB then 13. N–Q6ch) **13. N–Q6ch BxN 14. PxB Q–B1 15. B–R6!**

Dotting every "i" and crossing every "t": Black has lost both the pawn and the castling.

15. . . . R–KN1 16. Q–B3 BxB 17. QxB N–B3 18. QR–Q1 N–Q1 19. Q–N5 N–B3 20. Q–B6 P–KN4 21. R–K5, Black resigned.



After 15. . . . P–K4

This peculiar position arose in Geller–Vasiukov, U.S.S.R. ch, 1975, in an acute variation of the Paulsen system of the Sicilian Defense:

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP Q–B2 5. N–QB3 P–K3 6. B–K2 N–B3 7. O–O NxN 8. QxN B–B4!?

An active but strategically dubious plan since in the Sicilian the Black Bishop has the primary duty of taking care of his King.

9. Q–Q3 P–QR3 10. B–N5! P–R3 11. B–R4 P–Q3 12. QR–Q1 B–Q2 13. P–QR3 R–QB1 14. K–R1!

With a positional threat of 15. P–B4, giving White a very strong position. Black's reply is for all practical purposes forced.

14. . . . P–KN4 15. B–N3 P–K4

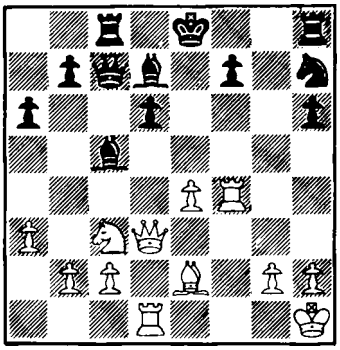
Black has managed to patch up the Kingside, and now he intends to get very active play by means of . . . B–K3, . . . K–K2, and, possibly . . . P–KR4. White is bound to take some steps at once.

16. P–B4!!

Wonderful! White explodes the Black position at what seems to be the most fortified point. After the piece sacrifice, the game is opened to reveal numerous weak spots in the Black camp.

16. . . . KPxP 17. BxP! PxB 18. RxP N–R2

Definitely, not 18. . . . K–K2? due to 19. RxN.



19. N–Q5

White's position is so powerful that, at first glance, as sure as eggs is eggs Black loses the game. Yet to retain the initiative, White must play with extreme precision. White could force a win: 19. RxP!! KxR 20. R–KB1ch K–N2 (or 20. . . . K–K1 21. N–Q5 Q–B3 22. P–K5, etc.) and only then 21. N–Q5 Q–Q1 22. Q–QB3ch! K–N1 (22. . . . K–N3? 23. B–R5ch!) 23. B–B4! (threatening 24. N–K7 mate) B–K3 24. N–B6ch NxN 25. BxBch K–N2 26. BxR or 24. . . . QxN 25. RxQ NxR 26. BxBch K–N2 27. Q–KN3ch! The Knight move does not, however, prevent White from winning.

19. . . . Q–Q1 20. P–QN4?

Now this move is a serious blunder, depriving the White Queen of the all-important square QB3. Still, there is a way to win by means of a combinational blow 20. RxP!, though after 20. . . . Q–N4!, White would have to fight tooth and nail for victory (which is the reason 19. RxP is better). Black soon succeeded in consolidating his position:

20. . . . B–R2 21. P–K5 B–K3! 22. PxP R–B3 but blundered again in time pressure and lost. Indeed, many roads lead to delusion but only one to the truth in the game of chess!

The reader is justified in asking why all "demolition assignments" in chess go to White and only in the Sicilian Defense. This is not true, and to prove it, here are two interesting miniatures.

U.S.S.R., 1972

PIRC DEFENSE

Suetin *Zhidkov*

1. P–K4 P–KN3 2. P–Q4 B–N2 3. N–QB3 P–Q3 4. P–B4

One of the most active plans, though preference is more often given to the variation 4. N–B3.

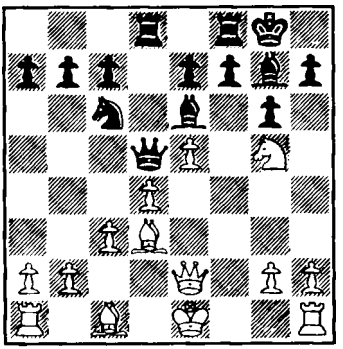
4. . . . N–KB3 5. N–B3 O–O 6. B–Q3 N–B3! 7. P–K5

Though recommended by theoreticians, this move is by no means compulsory since it weakens White's central pawns somewhat. More reliable is 7. B–K3, which, after . . . B–N5 8. P–KR3 BxN 9. QxB, would lead to the variation encountered in the celebrated Fischer—Benko game (U.S. Championship, 1963/64).

7. . . . QPxP 8. BPxP N–Q4 9. NxN QxN 10. P–B3 B–K3!

A very strong move preparing the groundwork for exerting pressure along the Q-file and disrupting the White center. 11. P–B4 is not dangerous in view of . . . Q–Q2 12. P–Q5? N–N5 13. B–K2 B–N5.

11. Q–K2 QR–Q1 12. N–N5?!



On 12. O–O there follows 12. . . . P–B3!, disrupting White's center and giving Black equal play. In trying to repel this threat and simultaneously exchange the Black Bishop (bad is 12. . . . B–B4 due to 13. B–QB4 Q–Q2 14. P–K6!), White ignores another more serious threat.

12. . . . NxQP! 13. PxN QxQP

Gone with the wind is White's pawn center, the bulwark of his well-being. Now White's Bishop is in jeopardy, the King cannot castle, and the pawn on K5 is doomed.

14. NxB?

"If you come under attack, exchange pieces," says a wise rule. But we have already emphasized that one cannot be too careful in implementing the many rules. With the KB-file open, the White King finds itself surrounded on all sides by the Black pieces. White had only one acceptable move at his disposal, 14. B–B2! But even in this case Black's chances are better. Here is an approximate variation: 14. . . . Q–R5ch! 15. P–N3 (15. Q–B2 Q–N4ch) Q–N4ch 16. K–B2 (16. B–Q2 QxP) B–B5 17. Q–K3 P–KB3! 18. N–B3 PxP 19. B–K4 R–Q5! with an attack.

14. . . . PxN 15. B–QB4 BxP 16. P–KN3

Defending against the threats 16. . . . Q–R5ch and 16. . . . BxP. 16. B–K3 does not work due to 16. . . . Q–R5ch 17. B–B2 RxB!

16. . . . R–B7!

A well-thought-out concluding blow.

17. QxR?? Q–Q8 mate.

On 17. BxPch K–R1 18. Q–K3 there follows 18. . . . RxRP! 19. RxR Q–Q8ch 20. K–B2 R–B1ch 21. K–N2 Q–B8 mate, and on 17. Q–K3 the answer is 17. . . . QxB 18. QxB R–B4! 19. Q–K2 Q–N5ch 20. B–Q2 QxP, etc.

Tbilisi, 1973

FRENCH DEFENSE

Makarichev — *Vaganian*

1. P–K4 P–K3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–Q2 N–QB3

A well-known system of development which, for some reason, enjoys little popularity. A more frequent move is 3. . . . P–QB4 or 3. . . . N–KB3.

4. KN–B3 N–B3 5. P–K5 N–Q2 6. B–K2

A passive continuation, allowing Black to set about disrupting White's center without further delay. Stronger is the time-tested 6. N–N3 or 6. B–N5.

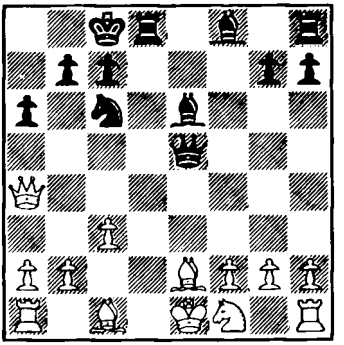
6. . . . P–B3! 7. PxP QxP 8. N–B1 P–K4! 9. PxP N/2xP 10. QxP?

We know from the section "The Journey Will Be Dangerous" how risky such operations are in the early phase of the opening. Coming under enemy blows, the White Queen speeds up the development of the Black pieces. Stronger is 10. N–N3, which can be countered with . . . B–KN5.

10. . . . B–K3 11. Q–N5 P–QR3! 12. Q–R4

But not 12. QxNP?? R–R2, winning the Queen.

12. . . . O–O–O 13. NxN QxN 14. P–QB3



So, Black enjoys a considerable lead in development, but the question is whether or not he can materialize it. For his part, White intends to solve all opening problems with N–K3 (possibly, with a preceding move B–KB4) and O–O, retaining his extra pawn. Decisive countermeasures are required.

14. . . . B–QN5!!

Training the guns at the pawn on QB3 (threatening 15. . . . BxPch) and threatening both 15. . . . N–Q5 and 15. . . . B–B5. White's reply is forced (15. B–Q2 B–B5 16. N–K3 BxB leaves him without even "material" consolation).

15. PxB

The Bishop sacrifice gives Black the important Q5-square for his Knight, beefing up the attacking forces considerably.

15. . . . B–B5 16. N–K3 BxB 17. KxB N–Q5ch 18. K–K1 KR–K1

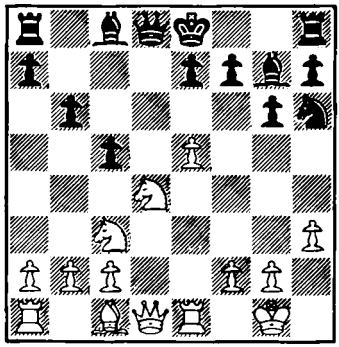
Calmly bringing up the last of the reserves. White is completely helpless.

19. B–Q2 Q–K5! 20. K–Q1 Q–Q6 21. R–K1 N–N6! 22. R–K2 NxR 23. K–K1 RxN! 24. PxR N–B7ch 25. K–Q1 (or 25. K–B2 R–B1ch) **NxPch 26. K–K1 Q–N8ch 27. K–B2 N–N5ch. White resigned** (if 28. K–N3, then . . . Q–Q6ch).

Here is another less typical, even paradoxical, but very interesting example of an explosive preventive sacrifice.

Tbilisi, 1954

Keres



Kholmov

The Knight on Q4 is under attack. If it is withdrawn, an exchange of Queens follows with a good game for Black.

12. N–B6!

What is the point? This Knight will never be able to extricate itself from the enemy stronghold!

12. . . . Q–Q2

In case of 12. . . . QxQ 13. RxQ B–N2 14. N–Q5, Black stands to lose at least a pawn.

13. NxKP!!

In sacrificing itself, the Knight deprives the Black King of castling, while the weakness of Black's Q3 and KB3 gives White a strong attack. It is interesting to note here that the exchange of Queens fails to ease Black's plight again: 13. . . . QxQ 14. RxQ KxN 15. B–N5ch K–K3 16. R–Q6ch with a well-known theme: catching the King in a mating net. If 13. . . . QxN 14. N–Q5 Q–Q1 15. N–B6ch BxN 16. PxBch, White wins a pawn and has a better position in the bargain.

13. . . . KxN 14. BxN! BxB 15. Q–B3

With a double threat: 16. Q–B6ch and 16. QxR. Black manages to find a clever answer to both threats but does not save the game.

15. . . . B–KN2! 16. N–Q5ch! (but not 16. QxR in view of 16. . . . B–N2 and 17. QxP Q–B3 and 18. . . . R–R1) **16. . . . K–Q1** (if 16. . . . K–B1, then 17. P–K6! Q–N2 18. P–K7ch K–K1 19. Q–B6!) **17. QR–Q1 B–N2 18. Q–QN3 B–QB3 19. NxNP PxN 20. QxP! BxKP 21. RxQch BxR 22. RxB,** and Black resigned in several moves.

Inevitable Catastrophe

The simple truth is that the King must be protected before it is too late. Misunderstanding of this principle results in the King's prolonged and patently risky stay in the center—sometimes, but by no means always. Errors committed at the early stage of the opening or unsound strategy may also logically lead to such situations.

Varna, 1962

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Fischer *Najdorf*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–QR3 6. P–KR3

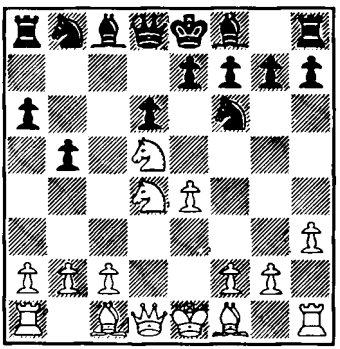
Fischer is fond of modernizing and using, not without success,

long-known but forgotten continuations. The objective of this modest pawn move is to prepare the P–KN4 advance.

6. . . . P–QN4?

A very energetic but slightly premature move. Simpler and more logical is 6. . . . P–K3, and if 7. P–KN4 P–Q4! countering the White flank operation with a center blow.

7. N–Q5!?



A quite unusual attack, which creates serious positional problems for Black. First of all it is not too profitable for him to allow the exchange NxNch (as we shall see). Neither is 7. . . . NxN 8. PxN attractive for Black because White's P–Q5 will very much hamper Black's position, and at the same time White threatens P–QR4 undermining Black's pawns on the Queenside.

7. . . . B–N2?

"Black's subsequent troubles can be traced to this," Fischer remarked in *My 60 Memorable Games*. Then he suggested 7. . . . NxP!? 8. Q–B3 N–B4 9. P–QN4 P–K3! 10. PxN PxN 11. QxP R–R2. In my opinion, 11. P–B6 is somewhat stronger, since it hinders further development of Black's Queenside. After the exemplary 11. . . . B–K3 12. P–QR4 P–N5 13. P–B3! PxP 14. R–R3 B–K2 15. RxP or 11. . . . B–K2 12. B–K3 B–B3 13. P–QR4 P–N5 14. B–Q3 B–K3 15. R–QN1 White has good attacking prospects.

However, let us return to our ship.

8. NxNch NPxN 9. P–QB4! PxP

After the exchange on B3, Black's Kingside and Queenside have both been weakened. The text move completely opens up the position. However, on 9. . . . P–N5 10. B–K2, Black's position is likewise unenviable. Thus, 10. . . . BxP 11. B–B3 BxB 12. QxB N–Q2 leads to an immediate rout because of 13. N–K6! (13. . . . Q–N1 14. N–B7ch).

10. BxP BxP

A desperate move. But does Black have any alternative? 11. Q–N3 is threatened, and on 10. . . . P–K3, White replies 11. Q–R5. 10. . . . Q–R5ch is too late in view of 11. B–Q2 Q–K4 12. Q–N3 QxPch 13. B–K3 QxNP 14. BxPch and 15. O–O–O.

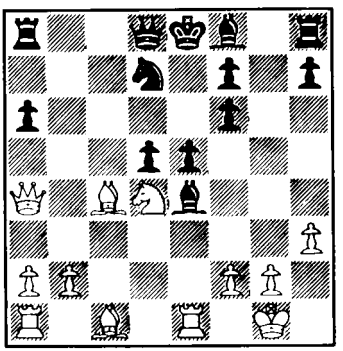
11. O–O P–Q4 12. R–K1!

White's position is so strong as to offer an alternative route of attack: 12. B–N3. But Fischer takes the short cut to victory not fearing the countering 12. . . . BxP on which there can follow 13. KxB PxB 14. Q–B3 N–Q2 15. N–B6! (but not 15. N–K6? because of 15. . . . R–N1ch!) 15. . . . Q–B1 16. B–R6! with decisive threats.

12. . . . P–K4

Quite bad is 12. . . . P–K3 13. Q–R5 B–N3 14. QxQP!

13. Q–R4ch N–Q2



14. RxB!

The position was ripe for this sacrifice, which clears the path toward the Black King for the White pieces.

14. . . . PxR 15. N–B5 B–B4 16. N–N7ch

The "centralized" King can also be dealt with in a different way: force it to move, thereby depriving it of castling. Also good, of course, is 16. B–R6 Q–N3 17. BxPch K–Q1 18. R–Q1 with a rout.

16. . . . K–K2 17. N–B5ch K–K1 18. B–K3!

Eliminating a strong defender.

18. . . . BxB 19. PxB Q–N3 20. R–Q1 R–R2 (or 20. . . . R–Q1 21. P–KN4 threatening 22. BxPch, and on 21. . . . R–KB1 there follows 22. N–Q6ch K–K2 23. N–B8ch!) **21. R–Q6 Q–Q1 22. Q–N3 Q–B2 23. BxPch K–Q1 24. B–K6, Black resigns.**

Black's erroneous 6th move proved fatal, actually depriving the Black King of castling. Thus even outwardly minute mistakes made in double-edged openings can throw one far back in development. Of course, to capitalize on such errors, the opponent must take highly energetic measures, sometimes unexpected and paradoxical.

Leningrad, 1960

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

Taimanov *Polugaevsky*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 N–KB3 4. Q–R4ch QN–Q2

The first slip, allowing White to create a strong and mobile pawn center.

Better is 4. . . . P–B3 or even 4. . . . N–B3.

5. N–B3

White is, of course, in no hurry to capture the QBP.

5. . . . P–K3 6. P–K4! P–B4?

A premature counterattack for which Black has to pay in the end with major spatial concessions and a lag in development. But it was certainly extremely difficult for Black to foresee the consequences of this natural move. Moreover, until this game theoreti-

cians regarded 6. . . . P–B4 as perfectly acceptable. More cautious, of course, is 6. . . . P–B3, but then Black is cramped.

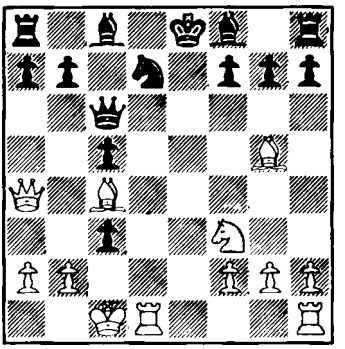
7. P–Q5! PxP 8. P–K5!

The only way! After 8. PxP B–Q3 Black has nothing to fear. This theme of successively advancing the center pawns occurs in other variations of the Queen's Gambit as well.

8. . . . P–Q5

Black gallantly accepts the challenge and a bitter struggle ensues. In earlier research, Keres recommended 8. . . . P–QN4 with the idea of counterattacking, but, as Panov shows in his *The Course in Openings*, it is unsound in view of 9. QxNP R–QN1 10. Q–R4 P–Q5 11. PxN PxN 12. BxP R–N5 13. Q–Q1! QxP 14. B–KN5 Q–Q3 15. Q–K2ch B–K2 16. R–Q1 PxP 17. O–O! with a decisive attack for White.

9. BxP PxN 10. PxN QxP 11. B–KN5! Q–B3 12. O–O–O!



With several energetic moves and two pawn sacrifices, White has gained an impressive advantage in development, and his last move is a veritable knockout punch. Black realizes that he cannot capture the Queen in view of 13. KR–K1ch B–K2 14. RxBch K–B1 15. RxPch K–N1 16. R/7xNch QxB 17. R–Q8ch K–B2 18. N–K5ch and 19. NxQ, with White emerging a piece up. So the advantage in development, achieved in the opening fight by way of sacrifices, is transformed into an attack on the King stuck in the center. We have already observed themes of this sort.

12. . . . PxPch?

Polugaevsky's usual resourcefulness in difficult positions betrays him this time. Much craftier is 12. . . . B–K2 with a sly trap: if 13. KR–K1, then 13. . . . O–O! 14. QxQ BxBch! (that is why the White King had to hold on to B1!) 15. NxB PxPch 16. KxP PxQ and White's attack has evaporated, leaving nothing but wisps of melancholy recollections. Nevertheless, 17. NxBP N–N3 18. N–R6ch K–R1 19. N–B7ch would still draw for him. Only one continuation leads to victory for White: 13. QxQ! PxQ 14. BxB KxB 15. KR–K1ch K–Q1 (15. . . . K–B1 16. N–N5) 16. N–K5 K–B2 17. NxBP R–B1 18. R–K7 and Black cannot avoid material losses.

13. KxP B–K2 14. KR–K1 P–B3 15. B–N5 Q–N3 16. K–B1!

Black's pieces huddled around their King are bound hand and foot. As we recall the Morphy–Consultants game, this bodes no good. . . .

16. . . . PxB 17. BxNch K–B1 18. RxB!

Depriving the King of the last of his faithful retainers.

18. . . . KxR 19. Q–K4ch K–Q1 20. B–B5ch K–B2 21. Q–K5ch K–B3 22. R–Q6ch K–N4 23. Q–N2ch, Black resigns.

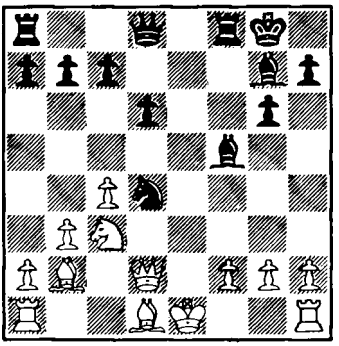
The Role of Tactics

The reader has no doubt noted the great role tactics play in preventive sacrifices. Naturally, the chess player cannot do without tactical weapons—in any combination and sacrifice not just the preventive sacrifice. But with this kind of sacrifice, tactical inventiveness is particularly vital, since to achieve the advantage, that is, to keep the enemy King in the center, is no guarantee of success in itself and threatens to evaporate on the very first misstep.

Take a good look at the following ending. The attack demanded of Black imaginativeness and a virtuoso tactical performance.

Moscow, 1950

Boleslavsky



Alatortsev

White is somewhat behind in development. He should avoid sophistry and simply castle. But he has decided first to exchange or drive back the Knight on Q5.

15. N–K2?

How can Black cash in on his opponent's sluggishness? Boleslavsky finds a remarkably pretty continuation.

15. . . . NxN 16. BxN

The main variation remains "in the wings." Here it is: 16. BxB N–B5!! 17. BxR (17. O–O results in the loss of the Queen after 17. . . . Q–N4!, and on 17. QxN there follows 17. . . . Q–K2ch 18. B–K2 KxB and the White King is caught in the center since 19. Q–K3 leads to the loss of a pawn) 17. . . . Q–B3! 18. P–B3 B–K1ch 19. K–B2 N–Q6ch 20. K–N3 P–KN4! and there is no defense to the threat of 21. . . . Q–K4ch.

16. . . . BxB 17. QxB Q–N4 18. P–N3 QR–K1!

A decisive move. Castling short, from which White can no longer refrain, leads to a forced defeat.

19. O–O B–R6 20. P–B4

Necessary. If 20. KR–K1, then 20. . . . RxP!

20. . . . BxR!!

Clearly, Black ought to have foreseen and evaluated this pretty Queen sacrifice.

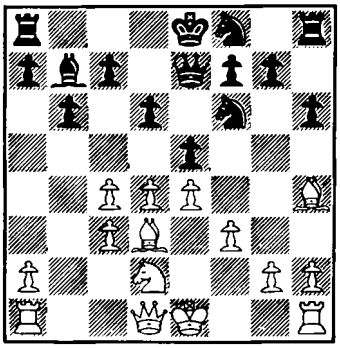
21. PxQ RxB 22. Q–B3 B–N7! 23. Q–Q3 B–B6

It is all over. There is no satisfactory defense to . . . R–N7ch. On 24. K–B1, Boleslavsky pointed out 24. . . . RxKRP 25. Q–Q4 P–QB4! 26. Q–B3 B–B3 27. K–K1 R–B6!

24. R–KB1 R–N7ch 25. K–R1 B–B3 26. RxRch KxR 27. Q–B1ch R–B7ch, White resigns.

Varna, 1962

Hecht



Tal

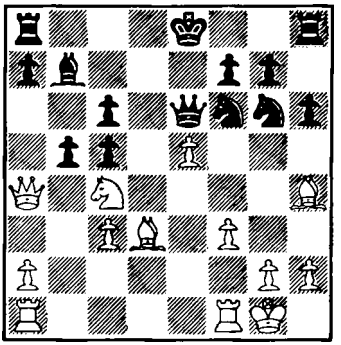
A typical outline of the Nimzo-Indian Defense. Black intends to seal the center completely, hoping that his Knights will subsequently overpower the White Bishops. Attempting to open up the game and activate his Bishops, Tal sacrifices a pawn.

13. P–B5!? QPxP 14. PxKP QxP 15. Q–R4ch P–B3?

A natural but poor move. The fatal weakening of the Q3-square will eventually make itself felt. Correct is 15. . . . N/1–Q2, preserving the possibility of castling on either side. There could follow 16. B–QN5 O–O–O 17. QxP QxBP 18. O–O! After 18. . . . QxN 19. B–R6 BxB 20. QxBch K–N1 21. QR–N1, White's attack is very dangerous, but Black is a piece up and possibly has sufficient de-

fensive resources. Now White has resolved to keep the Black King in the center regardless of the cost.

16. O–O N–N3 17. N–B4 Q–K3 18. P–K5 P–N4



19. PxN!!

A stunning move—a Queen sacrifice, the rarest kind of preventive sacrifice!

19. . . . PxQ 20. PxP R–KN1 21. B–B5!!

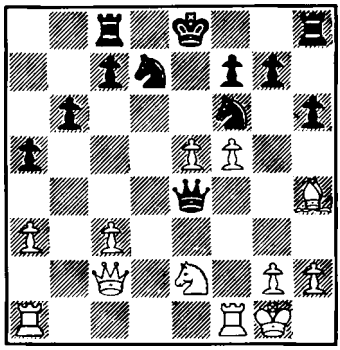
The whole point of White's plan. On 21. . . . QxB the Knight fork 22. N–Q6ch follows (remember the hasty 15. . . . P–B3?); on 21. . . . QxN 22. KR–K1ch is no less weighty. Black is forced to part with his huge trophy before he could enjoy it.

21. . . . NxB 22. BxQ B–R3 23. N–Q6ch K–K2 24. B–B4!

The last "feint." White keeps his hanging pieces intact and acquires good winning chances, for the Black pawn structure has been shattered.

24. . . . RxP 25. P–N3 KxN 26. BxB N–B4 27. QR–N1 and White gradually realized his advantage.

In this game, the dizzying chain of sacrifices resulted in an ending with a positional advantage for White. However, instances of this kind are not that rare in modern practice. Speaking of the preventive Queen sacrifice, I cannot but demonstrate the ending of the sensational game Lilienthal–Capablanca, Hastings, 1934/35. Quite possibly, Lilienthal's magnificent combination served as a prototype for Tal's strategy in the previous game!



White sacrifices his Queen for a mere piece.

1. PxN!! QxQ 2. PxP R–KN1 3. N–Q4!

Attacking the Queen and threatening a fatal check with the Rook from K1 (3. . . . Q–R4 4. KR–K1ch N–K4 5. RxNch K–Q2 6. R–Q5ch K–K1 7. R–K1 mate). Capablanca has no choice but to return the Queen immediately.

3. . . . Q–K5 4. QR–K1 N–B4 5. RxQch NxQ 6. R–K1 RxP 7. RxNch and soon won.

The Paradoxes of Castling

And so castling is the single most important element in the opening. As we have seen from the previous sections, any delay in castling is fraught with grave consequences. However, premature castling is equally dangerous: the opponent puts aside all other concerns and swiftly throws his pieces into an attack on the enemy King so ferocious that, as often as not, the King's fortress crumbles under the onslaught. The success of the attack depends on a number of positional factors, such as the concentration and activity of the attacker's pieces at the decisive sector, the balance of forces in the center, and so on.

Vienna, 1922

QUEEN'S PAWN OPENING

Alekhine — *König*

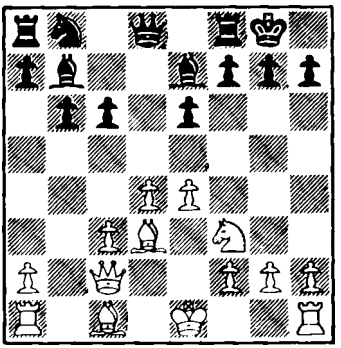
1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–QN3 3. N–QB3 B–N2 4. Q–B2 P–Q4?

Stronger is 4. . . . P–K3 5. P–K4 B–N5 with fully equal play, whereas now White acquires a strong and mobile pawn center.

5. PxP NxP 6. N–B3!

Warding off Black's counterplay associated with the . . . P–K4 advance. In Euwe–Alekhine, Budapest 1921, White did not play as strongly: 6. P–K4 NxN 7. PxN P–K4! 8. PxP Q–R5! with excellent play for Black. It is interesting to note that this same mistake was repeated forty-six years later by Gligoric against Larsen at Palma de Maljorca in 1967.

6. . . . P–K3 7. P–K4 NxN 8. PxN B–K2 9. B–N5ch P–B3 10. B–Q3 O–O?



Inasmuch as the Kingside is without its "palace guard"—the Knight on B3—this trite move is a serious blunder. With several energetic moves, Alekhine demonstrates that it is through castling that the Black King shall perish. Stronger is 10. . . . N–Q2 without finalizing the King's position.

11. P–K5 P–KR3 12. P–KR4!

This is how the Rook joins the attack. Since he has a strong center and the initiative, White can dispense with castling. Alekhine and other adepts of swift attack have more than once demonstrated this splendid theme.

12. . . . P–QB4 13. R–R3 K–R1 14. BxP!

Attacks of this nature rarely go unaccompanied by destructive sacrifices. Of course, the sacrifice is really an illusion: on 13. . . . PxB there follows 14. Q–Q2.

14. . . . P–B4 15. PxP e.p. BxP 16. B–KN5 PxP 17. N–K5! N–B3 18. Q–K2! P–N3 19. BxP K–N2 20. B–R6ch! K–N1 21. NxN

Reaping the harvest.

21. . . . BxN 22. QxPch K–R1 23. BxR QxB 24. QxB, Black resigns.

The following game, played much later, is in the same vein.

OLYMPIAD

Havana, 1966

SLAV DEFENSE

Portisch *Johannessen*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–QB3 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. P–K3 P–K3 5. N–B3 QN–Q2 6. B–Q3 PxP 7. BxBP P–QN4 8. B–Q3 P–N5!? (deviating from the main continuation in the Meran variation, 6. . . . P–QR3) **9. N–K4 B–N2 10. NxNch NxN 11. Q–R4 B–K2 12. B–Q2 P–QR4 13. P–K4! O–O?**

A very natural and . . . bad move. The Black King was far more secure in his original position than on the King flank. Black should play 13. . . . N–Q2! with a counterthreat of 14. . . . N–B4, and on 14. Q–B2 the reply could be 14. . . . P–QB4, engaging the enemy in the center.

14. P–K5! N–Q2

The Knight's position would be as bad on Q4.

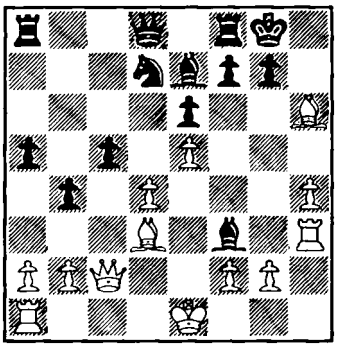
15. Q–B2 P–R3

A forced weakening: after 15. . . . P–N3 16. P–KR4, the threat 17. P–R5 is too dangerous, and 15. . . . P–KB4 16. PxP NxP 17. N–N5 likewise bodes little good for Black.

16. P–KR4 P–QB4 17. R–R3!

This move and the subsequent attack demanded of White far-reaching calculations and a profound evaluation of the chances inasmuch as Black had his counterthreats at the ready.

17. . . . BxN 18. BxRP!!



A fabulously beautiful and unexpected move! Instead of capturing the Black Bishop (which would give Black counterplay after 18. PxB PxP 19. BxP NxP!) White offers his own Bishop! However, Black is wary of taking it at this point: 18. . . . PxB 19. R–N3ch K–R1 20. Q–Q2 and White wins.

18. . . . BxRP

In his comments, Portisch contends that 18. . . . B–N5 could save the day and gives the following variation as proof: 19. R–N3 P–B4 20. RxB! PxR 21. B–R7ch K–R1 22. BxPch 23. Q–N6ch K–R1 24. Q–R6? R–B2 25. B–N6ch K–N1 26. BxRch with perpetual check. Many an author has accepted this variation on faith, though 24. B–N8!! (instead of 24. Q–R6?) leads to a forced win for White: 24. . . . R–B2 25. BxR Q–KB1 26. BxP! N–N1 (otherwise the Knight is lost) 27. Q–R5ch K–N2 28. QxPch and White has as many as four pawns for the piece and the continuing attack.

19. PxB PxB 20. K–K2!

Galvanizing the QR, hitherto the sole inactive piece. The threat is 21. R–N1ch K–R1 22. Q–Q2. A very pretty variation is 20. . . . B–N4 21. R–KN1 K–R1 22. Q–Q2!! BxQ 23. KxB and a mate is inevitable. On 20. . . . P–B4 a good reply is 21. P–B4! with the threat of 22. QR–R1.

20. . . . NxP

A desperate attempt to complicate the game.

21. PxN Q–Q5 22. RxB!

Now an elegant final combination culminating on the 24th move:

22. . . . QxR 23. R–N1ch K–R1 24. Q–B1!

Threatening 25. R–R1.

24. . . . P–B3 25. R–N6!. Black resigned.

In the following game, Black again castles prematurely, though this mistake is not so obvious. The fate of the game is resolved in an exceptionally sharp and tense fight.

Krasnodar, 1957

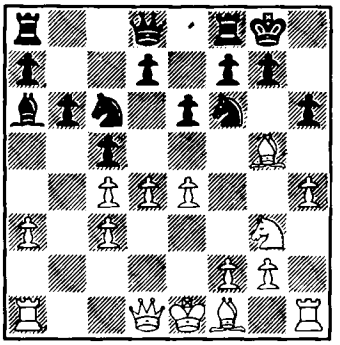
NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE

Vladimirov *Shamkovich*

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 B–N5 4. P–QR3 BxNch 5. PxB P–B4 6. P–K3 P–QN3 7. N–K2 N–B3 8. N–N3 B–R3?

An inaccuracy, as White convincingly shows. Once Black made up his mind to shelter his King on the Kingside, he should have castled immediately: 8. . . . O–O, and on 9. P–K4 played 9. . . . N–K1, avoiding the Knight pin. Also possible is another plan: 8. . . . P–Q3 9. P–K4 Q–Q2 followed by . . . B–R3 and . . . O–O–O.

9. P–K4 O–O 10. B–N5! P–R3 11. P–KR4!



This is the whole point: White sacrifices the Bishop, and if Black accepts the "Trojan horse," the Rook file will be opened up—an enormous danger. The threat of P–K5 compels Black to accept the offering either now or on the next move. On 11. . . . P–Q3, possible is 12. P–B4 PxP 13. PxP R–B1 14. N–R5 PxB 15. PxP NxKP 16. Q–N4 with a decisive attack.

11. . . . PxP 12. PxP PxB 13. PxP P–N3

Of course, neither 13. . . . N–R2 nor 13. . . . N–K1 due to 14. Q–R5. Black is willing to give back the extra Knight since 14. PxN QxP 15. P–K5 NxKP! 16. PxN QxPch 17. B–K2 BxP gives him the initiative, but White is in no hurry to win back material.

14. P–K5! N–R2 15. N–K4 NxNP?

This leads to defeat. A year later, Euwe tried to strengthen the variation for Black in his game with Toran (Spain–Holland Match, 1958). There followed 15. . . . K–N2 16. Q–N4 R–R1 17. N–B6 NxNP! 18. RxR QxR 19. QxN Q–R3 20. QxQch KxQ with an equal game. However, instead of 17. N–B6, clearly stronger is 17. O–O–O or 17. R–B1, which leads to the continuation played in Vladimirov–Shamkovich (17. . . . NxNP 18. RxR QxR 19. NxN, etc.).

16. Q–N4 K–N2

16. . . . P–B4 does not work because of 17. PxP e.p. NxN 18. Q–R3.

17. NxN R–R1 18. RxR QxR 19. R–B1 Q–R4 20. Q–B4 R–KB1 21. Q–B6ch K–N1 22. R–B3 Q–R1 23. Q–B4 P–Q3 24. R–R3 Q–N2 25. R–R7.

Black's Queen is trapped. Soon White won.

The pin of the KN after Black had castled (with his dark-square Bishop gone) turned out to be extremely dangerous. An interesting aside: White was able to fortify the attacked Bishop with P–KR4 precisely because he had not castled. Thus, evaluation of a concrete position may change the usual concepts.

Premature castling long is likely to entail an even more severe punishment. Let us examine a most interesting example, although Black fails to fully realize his idea.

MATCH

Kiev, 1968

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

Korchnoi *Spassky*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 B–K2 4. PxP PxP 5. B–B4 P–QB3 6. Q–B2

The fight for the QN1–KR7 diagonal is characteristic of this variation.

6. . . . P–KN3!

The need to secure an outpost for the Bishop on KB4 overrides Black's concern over a certain weakening of his Kingside. To the same end, 6. . . . B–B3 7. P–K3 N–K2 8. B–Q3 P–KN3 is possible.

7. O–O–O?

A rash decision. It is no accident that theoreticians recommend 7. P–K3 B–KB4 8. B–Q3 first and only after simplification castling long. Even then, castling short is considered safer. Now Black's pieces quickly join the attack against the White King's shaky position. As a countermeasure, White harbors an idea of capturing the center.

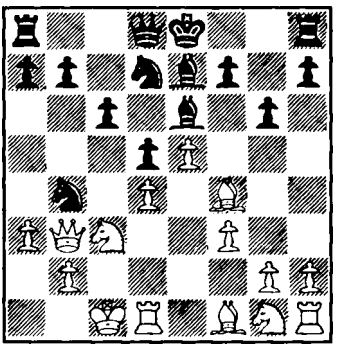
7. . . . N–B3 8. P–B3 N–R3 9. P–K4 N–QN5 10. Q–N3 B–K3

Black continues his development, again threatening the White King. White's reply is forced.

11. P–K5 N–Q2!

This is stronger than 11. . . . N–R4 inasmuch as after 12. B–K3, the Black Knight finds itself out of play. The potential strength of the Knight on Q2 will soon make itself felt.

12. P–QR3



It is time to add up the results of the opening battle. While White was busy "seizing" the center, Black brought almost all his pieces into play. White's Kingside is practically untouched by development. The center pawns are immobile and can easily be undermined (. . . P–QB4); the forced advance of the KP conceded the important KB4-square to the Black Bishop, simultaneously constraining White's QB. It is obvious that strategically White is in very poor shape.

Attacking the Black Knight, Korchnoi sort of tests his opponent's mettle: will he dare make a large sacrifice at this crucial stage in the game?

12. . . . P–QR4!

Spassky makes up his mind without a moment's hesitation: the gauntlet has been thrown down—it must be picked up! Objectively, the Knight sacrifice is fully justified. After the QR-file has been opened up, almost all available Black forces will be able to take part in the fight. Nevertheless, Korchnoi, brave warrior that he is, instantly accepts the sacrifice.

13. PxN PxP 14. N–N1 P–QB4!

Underscoring the Knight's position on Q2: on 15. PxP there follows a mighty reply: 15. . . . NxBP.

15. P–N4

Blocking the Bishop from B4 and setting the stage for the development of the KR and a Kingside sally.

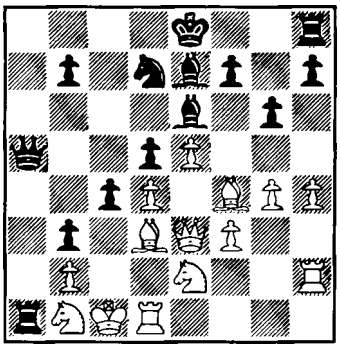
15. . . . P–B5 16. Q–K3 R–R7 17. P–R4 Q–R4 18. R–R2 R–R8

Black's attack is rolling ahead unimpeded: . . . Q–R7 is threatened. White is forced to return the piece.

19. B–Q3 P–N6

Black need not hurry to take his piece.

20. N–K2



The simplest maneuver now is 20. . . . PxB 21. QxP P–KR4!, nipping White's counterattack in the bud and threatening to transfer the Bishop to KB4. This same plan was fully possible a move earlier. But Spassky, having raised the sword, unexpectedly lets it slip.

20. . . . B–N5 21. P–R5! O–O

Thanks to this move, White acquires a tangible though insufficient initiative. I. Zaitsev's analysis indicates that Black was still in a position to force a win: 21. . . . N–N3 22. PxP PxB 23. QxP K–Q2! 24. QxP R–B1ch 25. N–B3 BxN 26. R–QB2 BxPch 27. QxB R–R7! Moreover, Black's advantage is so big that he manages

to keep his edge even with the text move, although now this edge is hardly discernible, purely analytical so to speak.

22. PxP BPxP 23. QR–R1

Could White have dreamed of such a serious counterattack just a few moves back?

23. . . . PxB 24. QxP Q–B2ch 25. N–B3 N–N3?

Black's game is not shaping up and he commits an elementary oversight. The advantage could be kept by 25. . . . BxN 26. PxB RxB.

26. QxPch!, and White went into a better endgame.

We are mainly interested in the opening part of this dramatic game. The piece sacrifice with a view to a lightning attack on a castled King's position is remarkably convincing. It should be noted once again how great a gulf separates a "won" position from victory.

CHAPTER VIII

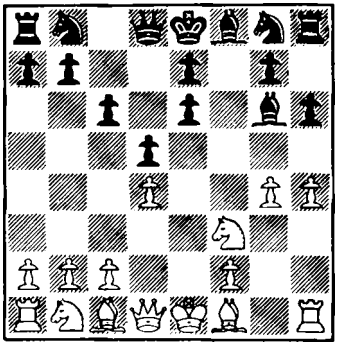
The Retarding Sacrifice

The aim of this sacrifice is to retard the natural development of the opponent's pieces. As distinct from preventive sacrifices (addressed to the opponent's King), retarding sacrifices may be aimed at any sector of the enemy position with a view to disrupting its normal development (with a minimum of forces).

The Blockading Sacrifice

One of the most popular blockading sacrifices is that of the center pawn (P–K6). It demonstrates particularly vividly the retardation theme. Here is an example:

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. P–K5 B–B4 4. P–KN4 B–N3? 5. P–KR4 P–KR3 6. P–K6! PxP 7. N–KB3



The idea and usefulness of the sacrifice are obvious: the "extra" pawn on Black's K3 hinders the development of Black's pieces; White acquires a powerful fort for his Knight on K5; Black's King-side has been compromised. White's compensation for the sacrificed pawn is more than adequate.

The following game is an excellent illustration of the most widespread attack techniques used in such cases.

MATCH

Amsterdam, 1933

ALEKHINE DEFENSE

Spielmann *Landau*

1. P–K4 N–KB3 2. N–QB3 P–Q4 3. P–K5 KN–Q2 4. P–K6!?

The consequences of this sacrifice are not as clear as in the previous example.

4. . . . PxP 5. P–Q4 N–KB3?

A fatal mistake! As Spielmann pointed out, an immediate countersacrifice, 5. . . . P–K4! 6. QPxP (if 6. NxP, then 6. . . . PxP 7. QxP? N–N3) 6. . . . P–K3, gives Black fully adequate play.

6. N–B3 P–B4 7. PxP N–B3 8. B–QN5 B–Q2 9. O–O Q–B2 10. R–K1 P–KR3 11. BxN! PxB 12. N–K5

And now the sacrifice has borne fruit: Black is behind in development, and his strategically crucial squares show appalling weaknesses.

12. . . . P–N4 13. Q–Q3 R–KN1 14. P–QN4 B–N2 15. Q–N6ch K–Q1 16. Q–B7 B–K1 17. QxP R–KB1 18. P–N5 N–K5 19. RxN!

A sacrificial introduction to a decisive combination.

19. . . . PxR 20. B–B4! BxN 21. BxB Q–Q2 22. R–Q1 and Black soon resigned.

This game alone suffices to demonstrate that after a retarding sacrifice has been accepted, passive tactics centered on just keeping

the extra pawn show little promise. Active counterplay is mandatory.

In the game that follows, Black played with much greater success up to a certain point.

Leipzig, 1960

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

Tal *Campomanes*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q4 P–Q4 3. N–QB3 N–KB3

This move is properly condemned by the theory of openings. The usual move is 3. . . . PxP.

4. P–K5 KN–Q2 5. P–K6!

Sacrificing a pawn in an even more favorable situation than in the Spielmann–Landau game.

5. . . . PxP 6. B–Q3 N–KB3

In view of the threat 7. Q–R5ch, the liberating advance . . . P–K4 is impossible for the time being.

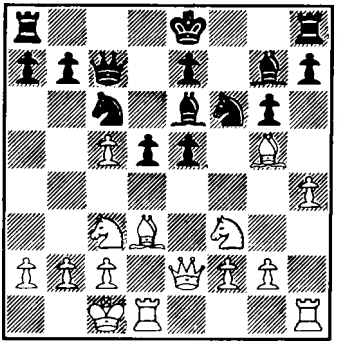
7. N–B3 P–KN3 8. P–KR4

Not the best move, in Tal's opinion. Indeed, free and easy development with 8. B–KN5 B–N2 9. Q–K2 O–O 10. O–O–O would give White a clear advantage.

8. . . . P–B4 9. PxP N–B3 10. Q–K2 B–N2 11. B–Q2 Q–B2?

Up to that point Black played well, but his last move loses a valuable tempo. Correct is 11. . . . O–O 12. O–O–O N–KR4! with full-fledged counterplay.

12. O–O–O P–K4 13. B–KN5! B–K3



Black has succeeded in advancing his center pawn, but he still faces difficulties on account of the uncomfortable position of his King in the center and the weakness of his "hanging" pawns. 13. . . . P–K5 does not work due to 14. BxN, with the capture on Q5 to follow.

14. N–N5 Q–N1 15. P–R5 PxP

Why not 15. . . . NxP? Tal must have been prepared to counter this move with something like: 16. KN–Q4 B–B2 17. RxN! PxR 18. N–B5 B–B1 19. P–QB4 or 16. . . . PxN 17. RxN! PxR 18. N–Q6ch! K–Q2 19. QxBch!! KxQ 20. B–B5ch with mate on the next move.

16. N/3–Q4! B–N5 17. P–KB3 P–K5 18. PxB NxN 19. NxN PxB 20. RxQP N–K5 21. N–B5! Q–K4 22. NxBch QxN 23. RxQP NxB 24. Q–N5ch K–B2 25. R–B1ch K–N3 26. Q–Q3ch K–R3 27. R–R1, Black resigned.

And here is another tense game in which, after slips on both sides, counterattack prevailed.

Karlsbad, 1923

ALEKHINE DEFENSE

Bogoyubov *Alekhine*

1. P–K4 N–KB3 2. N–QB3 P–Q4 3. P–K5 KN–Q2 4. P–Q4 P–QB4 5. B–QN5 N–B3 6. N–B3 P–QR3? (6. . . . P–K3 is better) **7. BxN PxB 8. P–K6!**

"White constricts the enemy pieces, gets rid of his weak pawns,

and has every reason to count on a decisive advantage," Tartakower noted in his *Hypermodern Chess Game.*

8. . . . PxP 9. O–O P–K4!

The pawn barrage must be eliminated at once or else Black's prospects are decidedly bad. Even this countersacrifice, though helpful, does not relieve him of all his difficulties.

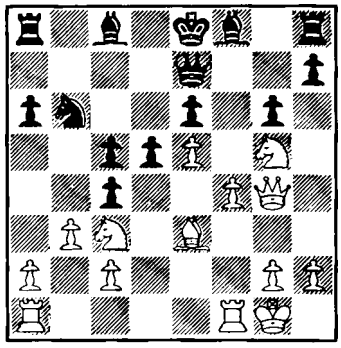
10. PxP P–K3 11. N–KN5 Q–K2 12. P–B4

A very tempting piece sacrifice: 12. R–K1 P–KN3 13. N/B–K4!? PxN 14. NxP Q–B2 15. B–N5, but after 15. . . . B–K2 no decisive threats are yet in sight.

12. . . . P–N3 13. Q–N4

A rather flimsy headlong attack was recommended by Maroczy in the tournament book: 13. P–B5!? is parried with 13. . . . NxKP! (Maroczy considered only 13. . . . PxP 14. NxQP! PxN 15. QxP R–R2 16. P–K6) and on 14. PxP Black replies 14. . . . B–N2 15. B–B4 O–O!

13. . . . N–N3 14. P–QN3 P–B5 15. B–K3 P–B4!



The battle has entered a fierce phase—one swift blow follows another. From the psychological point of view, Alekhine has scored a point: his opponent faces problems of extraordinary difficulty.

16. B–B2?

Only the variation 16. P–QN4! PxP 17. N/B–K4 PxN 18. BxN,

which Tartakower pointed out, could maintain the powerful attack.

16. . . . P–R3 17. N–B3?

Another timid move, which prompted Tartakower to remark: "Here was the last chance to maintain the attack by playing 17. KN–K4!! But balmy weather makes one stingy." We have already encountered situations of this kind in which the logic of struggle calls for fresh sacrifices. 17. KN–K4! is in fact the best move, although after 17. . . . PxN 18. NxP Q–B2 19. N–B6ch K–Q1, the outcome of the battle remains absolutely unclear. The text move hands the initiative over to Black.

17. . . . Q–KB2! 18. N–KR4 R–KN1 19. P–R4 PxP 20. PxP B–QN2 and Alekhine won.

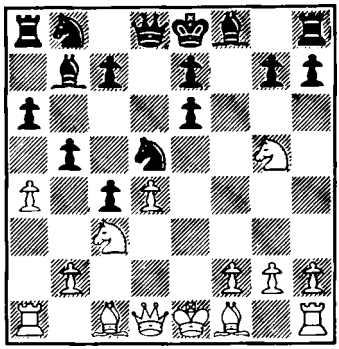
The retarding pawn sacrifice P–K6 occurs in many modern openings, such as the Sicilian Defense, Caro-Kann Defense, Alekhine Defense, King's Indian Defense, Queen's Gambit Accepted, etc. Here are some examples from King's Indian Defense.

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–KN3 3. N–QB3 B–N2 4. P–K4 P–Q3 5. N–B3 O–O 6. B–K2 QN–Q2(?) 7. P–K5 N–K1 8. P–K6! PxP 9. N–KN5 N/2–B3 10. B–Q3

Black faces a difficult defense inasmuch as the Kingside and his K3-pawn are very weak. On 7. . . . PxP (instead of 7. . . . N–K1) there follows 8. PxP N–N5 9. P–K6! PxP 10. O–O N–B4 11. B–N5 B–B3 12. Q–B1 P–B3 13. BxB! NxB (13. . . . PxB 14. P–KR3) 14. P–QN4 QN–Q2 15. Q–K3, and White emerges with a sizable positional advantage (Lisitsyn–Zagorovsky, U.S.S.R. Championship, Leningrad 1949).

A similar theme occurred in another game (Queen's Gambit Accepted):

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 N–KB3 4. N–B3 P–QR3 5. P–K4!? P–QN4 6. P–K5 N–Q4 7. P–QR4 B–N2 8. P–K6!? PxKP 9. N–N5!



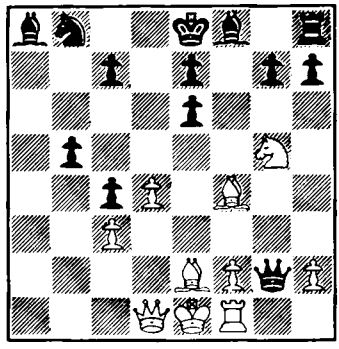
White has sacrificed two pawns, but the disastrous weakness of Black's Kingside and K3 pawn is good compensation. The threats are 10. NxKP and, more serious still, 10. Q–B3.

Here is how events unfolded in Bronstein–Lyavdansky, U.S.S.R. Championship, Kiev 1964:

9. . . . NxN 10. PxN Q–Q4 11. B–K2!

Sacrificing yet a third pawn.

11. . . . QxNP 12. R–B1 B–Q4 13. PxP! PxP 14. RxR BxR 15. B–B4



Those interested in the problems of sacrifices are well advised to address themselves to this position with special attention. Black is three(!) pawns up and is not threatened with mate (the usual rejoinder by skeptics); nevertheless, his position is all but indefensible, so strong is White's initiative.

15. . . . P–N3

On 15. . . . B–Q4 White can reply 16. B–N4! threatening to win the Queen (17. B–R3), though looming large is a fantastic variation: 16. . . . P–R3!? 17. B–R3 PxN 18. BxQ PxB 19. BxB PxB and Black has two pieces and three pawns for the Queen but is soon to part with some of his treasures.

16. NxKP N–R3 17. Q–R1 B–N2 18. Q–R5 Q–B3 19. P–Q5! Q–Q2 (if 19. . . . QxP, then 20. QxN) **20. B–K5 R–N1 21. P–B4! BxP**

Black is fed up with his agonizing defense and sacrifices a piece. However, more tenacious is 21. . . . B–R3 followed possibly by 21. . . . K–B2 and . . . R–QN1.

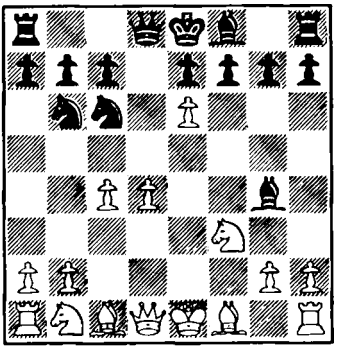
22. NxB RxN 23. QxN and White won.

The Alekhine Defense is an extremely convenient vehicle for a retarding sacrifice, since White's center pawn is able to cross the demarkation line as early as the second move. We have already seen an instance of this sacrifice in the Alekhine Defense (Chapter VIII, Spielmann–Landau). Let us now consider another example in which the defense ultimately triumphs.

ALEKHINE DEFENSE

Ilyin-Zhenevsky *Levenfish*

1. P–K4 N–KB3 2. P–K5 N–Q4 3. P–QB4 N–N3 4. P–Q4 P–Q3 5. P–B4 PxP 6. BPxP N–B3 7. N–KB3 (better is 7. B–K3) **7. . . . B–N5 8. P–K6!?**



A tempting sacrifice: in case of 8. . . . BxP 9. P–Q5 NxP Black gets three pawns for a piece but White has the advantage, and 8.

. . . PxP sets a classic scene for this sacrifice. But is it really classic? Let us recall the Spielmann–Landau game in which Black accepted the sacrifice only to find himself without chances for serious counterplay and so White's attack developed essentially unimpeded. But here Black exerts strong pressure on the center, and White's KN—the star of his strategy—is tied down.

8. . . . PxP 9. P–B5 N–Q4

A very interesting variation is 9. . . . BxN 10. PxB QxP! 11. PxN Q–R5ch 12. K–K2 RPxP with an attack for Black, though stronger is 10. QxB NxP 11. Q–B2.

10. B–QN5 Q–Q2 11. QN–Q2

White has created a dangerous threat of Q–R4 and N–K5. But Black completes the development of his pieces just in time to assume control over K5.

11. . . . P–KN3! 12. Q–R4 B–N2 13. N–K5

Black also has good play after 13. P–KR3 BxN 14. NxB O–O.

13. . . . BxN 14. PxB N–K6!

By tactical means, Black saves his Bishop on KN5 and in turn creates some threats.

15. Q–K4

On 15. K–B2 Levenfish indicated the variations 15. . . . N–Q8ch 16. K–N3 O–O! with an attack. No better is 16. RxN BxR 17. QxB Q–Q5ch 18. K–K1 O–O 19. Q–K2 (if 19. N–B3 Q–QN5ch!) QR–Q1.

15. . . . Q–Q5

A pretty tactical thrust, kicking the bottom out of White's plan. Still stronger is the recently discovered continuation 15. . . . O–O! 16. QxN N–N5! or 16. BxN Q–Q5!

16. BxNch PxB 17. QxQ N–B7ch 18. K–B2 NxQ, and Black enters the endgame with an advantage.

It is clear therefore that the P–K6 retarding sacrifice aimed at

undermining Black's pawn center, calls for an extremely accurate evaluation of each concrete position. Nimzovich underscored this need for circumspection: "The relative activity (or passivity) of each side should be appraised in every case with particular care [while pondering the sacrifice—Shamkovich]. Far be it from us to preach sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice. Sacrifice—but sensibly!"

The Pawn Wedge

The retarding operation is still more effective if it involves pawn penetration to the opponent's weakened squares Q6 (K6) or Q3 (K3). To drive such a wedge into the position of an opponent still in the throes of development is extremely advantageous—provided the retarding pawn (piece) is supported by the rest of the attacker's forces, of course.

MATCH, 1889

EVANS GAMBIT

Tchigorin *Steinitz*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 B–B4 4. P–QN4 BxP 5. P–B3 B–R4 6. O–O Q–B3?

Steinitz's move, which the first world champion defended with astonishing persistence. Nowadays, this move is of purely historical interest.

7. P–Q4 KN–K2 8. B–KN5 Q–Q3 9. P–Q5! N–Q1 10. Q–R4! B–N3 11. N–R3 Q–N3

Black's Queen is already in danger. On 11. . . . P–QB3, Tchigorin pointed out a pretty variation: 12. QR–Q1 P–B3 13. PxP QxP 14. N–QN5! PxB 15. NxKP Q–B4 16. N–Q6ch K–B1 17. QxQP!! with a mating threat.

12. BxN KxB 13. NxP Q–KB3 14. N–B3 QxP?

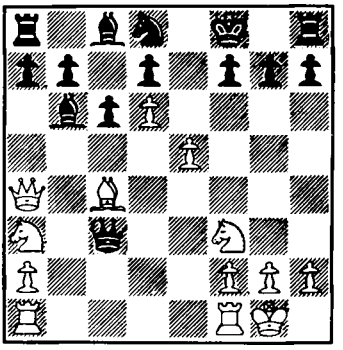
A suicidal move. Black could put up stubborn resistance by playing 14. . . . P–Q3. For instance, 15. P–K5 PxP 16. NxKP K–B1 (but not 16. . . . R–K1 in view of 17. QR–K1 K–B1 18. N–N4!) 17.

QR–K1 P–N3. However, even in that case, after 18. B–N3 K–N2 19. N–QN5 P–QR3 20. N–Q4, Black's position is far from easy since he has difficulty bringing his Knight on Q1 into play and coordinating his pieces.

15. P–K5! P–QB3

"Black has no moves that could aid in developing his game," Tchigorin noted.

16. P–Q6ch K–B1



A thematic position has emerged: the "nail pawn" on Q6 has completely paralyzed Black's Queenside. There is no time to bring into play the immured pieces since the game will be over long before that. It is clear now that Black's choice of the opening and, above all, his 14th move were a gross miscalculation.

Curiously, White has acquired his enormous advantage almost free, although Tchigorin was obviously prepared to pay as much as a piece to gain it.

17. B–N3!

Steinitz complimented his opponent: "A marvelous move linking the White Queen with the Kingside."

17. . . . P–KR3 18. Q–R4 P–N4 19. Q–R5 Q–Q6 20. QR–Q1 Q–R2

But not 20. . . . Q–N3 due to 21. QxQ PxQ 22. P–K6!

21. N–B2

Still stronger, according to Steinitz, is 21. P–K6! NxKP 22. BxN PxB 23. N–K5 to be followed by R–Q3.

21. . . . K–N2 22. N/2–Q4 Q–N3 23. Q–N4 P–KR4 (the threat was B–B2) **24. N–B5ch K–B1 25. QxNP QxQ 26. NxQ P–R5 27. K–R1 R–R4 28. P–B4**

The exchange of Queens has brought Black no relief: his Queenside is still dormant and White's threats grow increasingly menacing with each move.

28. . . . N–K3 29. P–N4! PxP e.p. 30. NxP R–R3 31. NxP! KxN 32. P–B5 K–K1 33. PxN PxP 34. N–K4, Black resigned.

In the following game, the pawn on K6 played the part of a powerful brake.

St. Petersburg, 1914

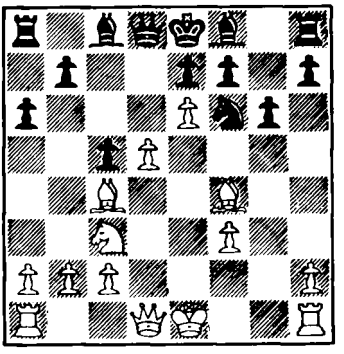
BENONI DEFENSE

Alekhine *Levenfish*

1. P–Q4 P–QB4 2. P–Q5 N–KB3 3. N–QB3 P–Q3 4. P–K4 P–KN3 5. P–B4 QN–Q2 6. N–B3 P–QR3

A serious mistake in a difficult opening: the Knight's position on Q2, if anything else, facilitates White's breakthrough in the center. Better is 5. . . . B–N2.

7. P–K5 PxP 8. PxP N–N5 9. P–K6! N/Q–K4 10. B–KB4 NxNch 11. PxN N–B3 12. B–B4!



With its swift forward thrust, the pawn on K6 has paralyzed the entire front of Black pieces. Black tries in vain to obtain by tactical means at least a semblance of counterplay.

12. . . . PxP 13. PxP Q–N3 14. Q–K2! QxNP 15. N–N5!!

A brilliant blow, inspired perhaps by Anderssen's great combination in the "Immortal Game." Since 15. . . . PxN 16. BxPch K–Q1 17. R–Q1ch B–Q2 18. B–K5! means immediate defeat, Black accepts the gift.

15. . . . QxRch 16. K–B2 QxR 17. N–B7ch K–Q1 18. Q–Q2ch B–Q2 19. PxB

In the face of imminent mate (if 19. . . . P–K4, then 20. N–K6ch K–K2 21. Q–Q6ch, etc.) Black resigned.

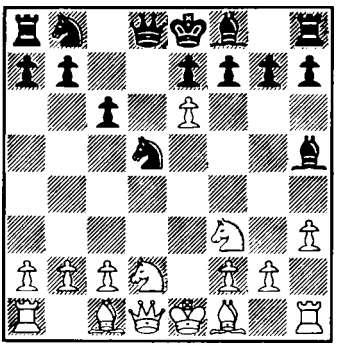
U.S.S.R. TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Moscow, 1966

CARO-KANN DEFENSE

Stein *Birbrager*

1. P–K4 P–QB3 2. P–Q3 P–Q4 3. N–Q2 PxP 4. PxP N–B3 5. KN–B3 B–N5 6. P–KR3 B–R4? (correct is 6. . . . BxN) **7. P–K5 N–Q4 8. P–K6!**



Black has played the opening carelessly and overlooked this classic blow. Here it is particularly ominous, since after 8. . . . PxP 9. P–KN4 the K5-square is completely under White's sway. For this reason Black has to suffer the pawn wedge.

8. . . . P–B3 9. P–KN4 B–N3 10. N–Q4 N–B2 11. P–QB3 Q–Q4

With this double attack Black hopes to get rid of "enemy No. 1," but White's plan is deeper.

12. Q–N3! QxR

After 12. . . . QxQ 13. RPxQ Black's situation is unenviable as well (13. . . . P–QB4 14. N–N5 NxKP 15. B–QB4), but now White wreaks havoc at lightning speed.

13. QxP K–Q1 14. N/2–B3!

Snapping the trap closed.

14. . . . B–Q6 15. B–B4! QxBch 16. K–Q2 QxPch 17. KxB NxP

On 17. . . . N/B–R3, 18. NxPch is decisive.

18. NxNch K–K1 19. Q–B8ch K–B2 20. N/B–N5ch, Black resigned.

Inhibiting the opponent's entire flank with a mere pawn is so advantageous an operation that, as often as not, it merits a substantial sacrifice, such as an exchange or a piece.

Albena, 1976

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Lutikov *Ermenkov*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5

This "side" move in the opening has been steadily winning over increasing support.

3. . . . P–KN3 4. O–O B–N2 5. P–B3 N–B3 6. P–Q4!?

A rather solid, though controversial, sacrifice of the center pawn. After 6. P–K5 N–Q4 and 6. R–K1 O–O 7. P–Q4 PxP 8. PxP P–Q4 Black usually achieves fully equal play.

6. . . . PxP 7. PxP NxKP

Weaker is 7. . . . P–Q4 8. P–K5 N–K5 in view of 9. N–K1! with the threat of 10. P–B3.

8. P–Q5 N–Q3!

An important intermediate move. If 8. . . . N–B1 9. R–K1, White doubtless gets more than adequate compensation for the pawn; on 9. . . . N–Q3 White can choose between 10. B–Q3 and a sharper 10. N–B3!? BxN 11. PxB NxB 12. B–N5.

9. N–R3

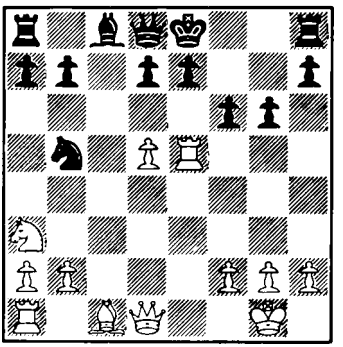
9. B–Q3 is possibly better. A piece sacrifice with 9. N–B3 BxN 10. PxB, NxB would hardly work here.

9. . . . N–K4 10. NxN BxN 11. R–K1 NxB?

A terrible mistake: Black should not have exchanged the K4 Bishop, a trusted defender of his King's position.

12. RxB P–B3

Alas, 12. . . . P–Q3 does not work due to 13. R–K1 NxN 14. B–N5!



13. NxN!! PxR 14. P–Q6!

Having sacrificed the Exchange, White has paralyzed the entire Black position with his center pawn and makes very short shrift of the enemy.

14. . . . O–O

14. . . . PxP 15. QxP is equally bad.

15. B–N5! Q–N3 16. PxP QxN

If 16. . . . R–K1, then 17. N–Q6.

17. PxR=Qch KxQ 18. Q–Q6ch K–N1 19. B–R6, Black resigned.

Black's QR and QB were passive onlookers right through the dramatic finale.

Riga, 1950

RAGOZIN DEFENSE

Beilin *Lipnitsky*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K3 3. N–QB3 N–KB3 4. N–B3 B–N5 5. Q–R4ch N–B3 6. B–N5 P–KR3 7. BxN QxB 8. N–K5

Theory recommends 8. PxP PxP 9. R–QB1. Taking pot shots can only result in a lag in development.

8. . . . B–Q2! 9. NxN

On 9. NxB there follows 9. . . . QxP! 10. R–QB1 PxP with a good position and an extra pawn for Black.

9. . . . BxNch 10. PxB BxN 11. Q–N3 PxP 12. QxBP O–O

In the wake of the opening skirmish Black has achieved a sizable positional advantage: he has completed his development, whereas White is in the midst of deployment.

13. P–B3 P–K4!

The situation calls for decisive actions.

14. P–Q5

14. P–K4 is better, although in that case, too, after 14. . . . PxQP 15. PxP Q–N4 White's position would be bad enough.

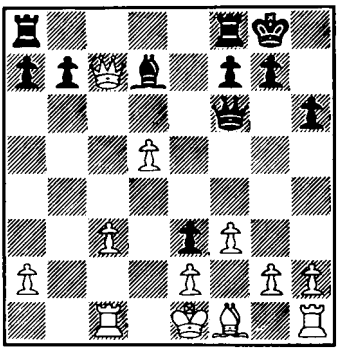
14. . . . B–Q2 15. QxP?

A serious mistake, revealing how far behind White is in the development of his pieces. White should concentrate solely on completing his development without giving a thought to material gains. Of course, correct is 15. P–K4.

15. . . . P–K5!

Certainly! Black's Bishop is invulnerable, and now White faces a formidable problem of how to galvanize his Kingside pieces.

16. R–QB1 P–K6!!



Black is undeterred and even sacrifices a piece in order to paralyze White's Kingside for good. And, as in the previous examples, the heroic role of the holding force is assumed by a humble "enlisted man."

17. QxB QR–B1 18. Q–R4

The QBP is indefensible. On 18. Q–N5 RxP 19. Q–N2 KR–B1 20. RxR RxR 21. P–KN3 there follows an elegant 21. . . . R–N6!

18. . . . RxP 19. R–Q1 KR–B1 20. P–N3 R–B8 21. B–R3

Clearly belated "development."

21. . . . RxRch 22. QxR Q–B6ch 23. K–B1 Q–Q7! 24. K–N2 R–B8!, White resigned

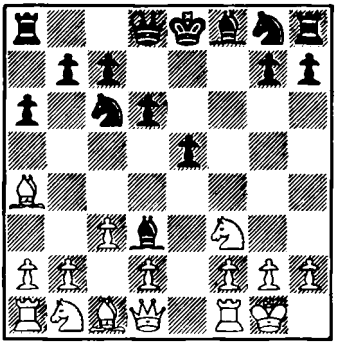
25. QxR would be countered with 25. . . . QxPch and mate next move.

A Temporary Weakness May Become Decisive

Sometimes the very nature of an opening system involving a temporary weakening of the critical squares invites a retarding sacrifice. This holds true, among others, for the following variation of the Ruy Lopez:

RUY ŁOPEZ

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–QR3 4. B–R4 P–Q3 5. P–B3 P–B4 6. PxP BxP 7. O–O B–Q6



White has intentionally created a "hole" on Q3 and admitted Black's Bishop there. Tournament experience with this once fashionable variation has shown that White can dislodge the blocking Bishop from Q3, acquiring a positional advantage. But White must tread extremely cautiously or else he may get into trouble. This is exactly what happened in Onoprienko–Radchenko, Krasnodar 1950.

8. R–K1 N–K2 (today's theoreticians believe that 8. . . . B–K2 is stronger) **9. R–K3** (better is 9. B–B2) **9. . . . P–K5 10. N–K1 N–B4 11. R–R3**

The sacrifice of the Exchange with 11. NxB! NxR 12. QPxN PxN 13. QxP deserves serious consideration. With a minimal sacrifice White obtains excellent play inasmuch as Black's position is weakened by the exchange of the light-square Bishop.

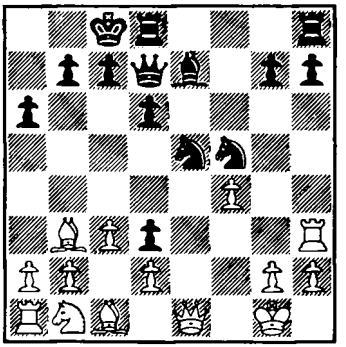
11. . . . B–K2!

It is as though Black were saying, "If you are that stingy, all right, I myself can sacrifice a pawn." Black's intention, however, is not motivated by generosity alone: after 12. NxB PxN 13. RxQP O–O, White will have to spend several tempos to disentangle his Queenside pieces, with the initiative passing to Black in the meantime. Hence, the text move is a fully justified developing sacrifice of a pawn.

12. NxB PxN 13. B–N3 Q–Q2 14. Q–K1?

A decisive blunder. White ought to have immediately eliminated the retarding pawn. Just a few moves later White will be prepared to give "half a kingdom" for it!

14. . . . N–K4 15. P–KB4 O–O–O!



By sacrificing his Knight Black retains his pawn wedge and opens up lines for the decisive attack.

16. PxN PxP 17. B–B4 B–B4ch 18. K–R1 P–K5!

After the last strong move White's situation becomes utterly desperate.

19. P–QN4

A futile attempt to complete, however sloppily, the development of his Queenside pieces.

19. . . . B–N3 20. N–R3 P–KR4!

The short cut to victory.

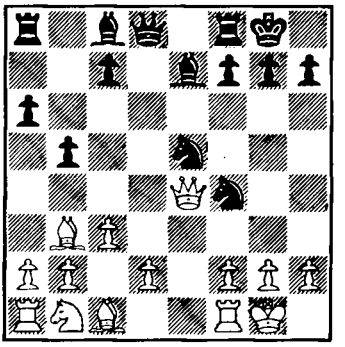
21. B–N2 R/Q–K1 22. R–R4 P–N4! 23. RxKP RxR 24. QxR P–R5 25. Q–K5 (the threat was . . . N–N6ch) **25. . . . R–K1 26. Q–B6 N–N6ch! 27. PxN PxP 28. Q–R6 K–N1 29. Q–R3 QxQch 30. PxQ R–K7, White resigns.**

Here are some examples from other Ruy Lopez variations (this popular opening is best suited to furnish illustrations to our chosen theme):

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–QR3 4. B–R4 N–B3 5. O–O B–K2 6. Q–K2 P–QN4 7. B–N3 O–O 8. P–B3 P–Q4!?

We witnessed a similar sacrifice of a center pawn, though in a slightly different context, in the Capablanca–Marshall game.

9. PxP NxP 10. NxP N–B5 11. Q–K4 NxN



For White to capture one of the Knights with his Queen would be an irremediable error for in response Black would immediately occupy the Q3-square with his remaining Knight, paralyzing White's entire Queenside. For example, 12. QxBN N–Q6 13. Q–K4 B–K3! 14. B–B2 (After 14. BxB PxB 15. QxKPch K–R1 White is totally helpless: one of the threats is 16. . . . B–B4, and on 16. P–QN4 there may follow 16. . . . B–Q3 17. N–R3 Q–N4 18. N–B2 QR–K1 19. Q–R3 N–B5, etc.) 14. . . . B–B5! 15. P–QN3 P–KB4 16. Q–K3 B–B4 17. Q–N3 NxP! 18. RxN Q–K2! and there is no satisfactory defense against the threat 19. . . . Q–K8ch.

Similar variations arise following 12. QxKN N–Q6 (also very strong is 12. . . . B–Q3 13. Q–K4 Q–R5 14. K–R1 B–KR6!)

Only one move is correct: 12. P–Q4!, giving Black certain (though possibly inadequate) compensation for the pawn after . . . B–N2! 13. QxB N–K7ch 14. K–R1 NxB 15. RxN N–Q6 or 13. QxBN N–Q6.

The following example is from a variation of the Bird Defense:

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 N–Q5 4. NxN PxN 5. O–O P–QB3 6. B–B4 N–B3 7. R–K1 P–Q3 8. P–QB3

It is precisely this move, with which one can hardly dispense in the Ruy Lopez, that temporarily weakens the Q3-square and may result in trouble (unless one is cautious).

In this respect, the following game is highly edifying.

Sochi, 1965

Ujtumen — *Lein*

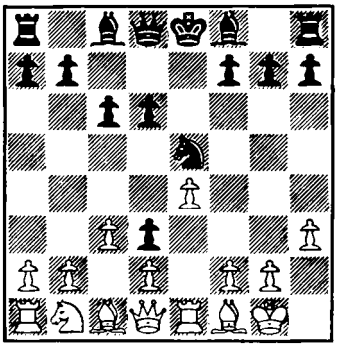
8. . . . N–N5! 9 P–KR3

The threat was 9. . . . Q–R5. On 9. Q–K2, Ozsvath against Szilagyi, Hungary 1966, played 9. . . . P–QN4! 10. B–N3 (10. B–Q3 Q–N3!) Q–R5 11. P–KR3 P–Q6! 12. Q–B1 N–K4 13. R–K3 P–N4 and Black succeeded in completely sealing off the opponent's Queenside.

9. . . . N–K4 10. B–B1?

A mistake, though an obscure one. Theory recommends 10. P–Q3 NxB (Could 10. . . . Q–N3 be better?) 11. PxN PxP 12. NxP with a small positional advantage for White.

10. . . . P–Q6!



But what if White drives away the Knight, the only defender of the fargone pawn?

11. P–KB4 Q–N3ch 12. K–R1 P–KR4!!

As in the previous game, the KR unexpectedly throws itself with great impact into the attack.

13. PxN

On 13. R–K3 a very strong continuation is 13. . . . N–B5 14. RxP NxNP.

13. . . . B–N5! 14. Q–N3 Q–B7!

The move is the linchpin of Black's plan: White is not in a position to defend his Rook (15. R–Q1 B–K7!), and his counterplay is inadequate.

15. QxP R–Q1 16. R–Q1 BxR 17. QxBPch K–K2 18. Q–B7ch R–Q2 19. PxPch K–B3! 20. P–K5ch

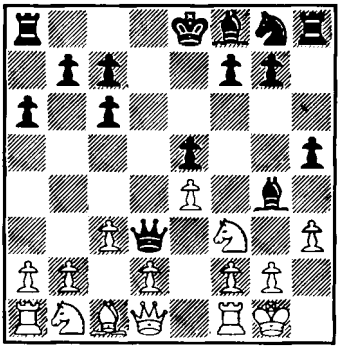
One instance in which a sacrifice of pursuit carries no punch: White has no material to pursue the attack, since his Queenside is still under house arrest.

20. . . . KxP 21. QxR QxBch 22. K–R2 BxP 23. P–B4 Q–B5ch 24. K–R1 K–B3, White resigned.

Here is another example:

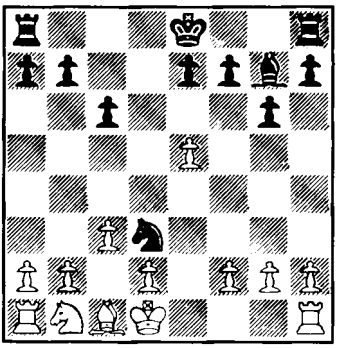
1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–QR3 4. BxN QPxB 5. O–O B–KN5 6. P–KR3 P–KR4 (this energetic move is considered the strongest by opening experts) **7. P–B3**

This is the way Stein played against Kholmov in the 34th U.S.S.R. Championship (1966), and after 7. . . . Q–B3 8. P–Q4! he found himself in a better position. Theoreticians were on the verge of acknowledging 7. P–B3 as the strongest move and the canonic recommendation a mistake when all of a sudden a Moscow amateur proposed an original move: **7. . . . Q–Q6!**



As a rule, the Queen is a highly unreliable blocker. Thus, the proposed move seemed bad on account of the reply 8. **PxB PxP 9. NxP.** But Black has a stunning rejoinder: **9. . . . B–Q3!!** Now White can count on nothing better than a perpetual check: **10. NxQ B–R7ch,** etc. Bad is 10. P–KB4 in view of 10. . . . B–B4ch 11. R–B2 BxRch 12. KxB P–N6ch 13. K–N1 QxKP 14. P–Q3 Q–R2! as well as 10. NxNP due to 10. . . . N–B3! 11. NxNch PxN and Black has an irresistible attack. Thus an established recommendation of opening theory was vindicated—but it took a clever retarding maneuver.

Other openings likewise allow a temporary weakening of the critical squares Q3, K3 or Q6, K6, which must be fortified or placed beyond the effective range of the enemy pieces in good time. Once none other than Fischer himself had to endure tremendous pressure as a result of a dubious experiment in the opening.



After 14. . . . NxN

This picturesque position arose, in Fischer–Matulovic, Palma 1970, after fourteen moves:

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–KN3 4. P–B3 N–B3 (this is stronger than 4. . . . B–N2, as Geller played against Bronstein, *see* Chapter VI, "The Journey will be Dangerous") **5. Q–K2 B–N2 6. P–K5 N–Q4 7. Q–B4?! N–B2 8. BxN QPxB 9. QxP Q–Q6!**

Even the Queen may prove to be an efficient blocker sometimes, particularly if supported by other pieces ready to relieve it.

10. Q–K3 B–B4 11. QxQ BxQ 12. K–Q1 N–K3 13. N–K1 N–B5 14. NxB NxN

The Black Knight has invaded the Q3-square, completely paralyzing the White Queenside. A way must be found to wriggle out of the difficult position.

15. P–KB4!

Courteously offering the opponent a Rook. However, after 15. . . . N–B7ch 16. K–K2 NxR 17. P–Q4 White easily wins a Knight and gets excellent compensation for the Exchange.

15. . . . B–R3?

In a bid to retrieve the pawn, Black wanders off the right course, namely, all-round support of the heroic Knight. After 15. . . . O–O–O! 16. R–B1 R–Q2 followed by . . . KR–Q1, White could hardly have managed to break the iron grip.

16. K–B2 NxB 17. R–K1!

An important fine point: White defends the K5-pawn, knowing full well that the Black Knight is ready for the taking and will remain so.

17. . . . BxP 18. P–KN3 B–R3 19. KxN and the game has equalized.

Of course, Black is in no way immune from this danger in certain opening systems, particularly Paulsen's Variation of the Sicilian Defense:

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–K3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP

The temporarily weakened Q3-square must be treated with great care. Here are two curious examples.

Hastings, 1973/74

Timman *Basman*

4. . . . B–B4?! 5. N–N3 B–N3 6. N–B3 N–K2 7. B–KB4 O–O?

Of course, 7. . . . P–Q4 is better, though after 8. Q–R5 followed by O–O–O White's chances are also clearly better, given the Black Bishop's remoteness from the Kingside.

8. B–Q6 P–B4 9. P–K5

White has sneaked his Bishop into Black's camp "for free," extremely hindering the development of his pieces. Black's position is very difficult.

YUGOSLAVIAN CHAMPIONSHIP, 1969

Ivanovic *Nikolic*

4. . . . P–QR3 5. N–QB3 Q–B2 6. B–Q3 N–QB3 7. B–K3 KN–K2?? 8. N/4–N5! PxN 9. NxP Q–N1 10. B–N6!

Creating two terrible threats with one move: 10. N–Q6ch and 10. N–B7ch.

10. . . . N–Q4 (this countersacrifice comes too late to save the game) **11. PxN Q–K4ch 12. K–B1 R–R5 13. B–B7 QxNP** (if 13. . . . QxQP, then 14. P–QB4) **14. R–QN1 Q–B3 15. PxN, Black resigned.**

In conclusion, let us consider an example in which a similar situation arose in a nameless opening. Black has meted out elegant and harsh punishment to his opponent for his neglect of one of the critical squares.

Netherlands, 1970

IRREGULAR OPENING

Jacobsen — *Ljubojevic*

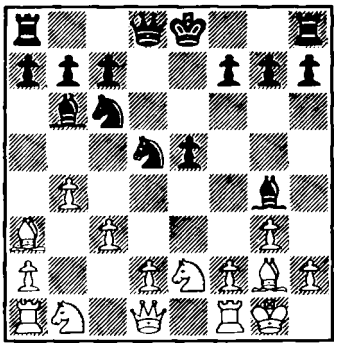
1. P–KN3 P–K4 2. B–N2 N–QB3 3. P–K4 B–B4 4. N–K2

By playing this way, White should, of course, forget about gaining any advantage.

4. . . . N–B3 5. P–QB3?

An attempt to implement P–Q4, but the pawn is doomed to stay put. Better is 5. QN–B3.

5. . . . P–Q4! 6. P–QN4? B–N3 7. PxP NxP 8. B–QR3? (hoping for 8. . . . O–O 9. P–N5) **8. . . . B–N5! 9. O–O**



While White indulged in fruitless maneuvers, Black brought up all his reserves. Now, if not for the Knight on Q4, Black could occupy the patently weak Q3-square. Wouldn't it be to Black's advantage to sacrifice that Knight?

9. . . . N–B5! 10. PxN Q–Q6!

By giving his Knight away Black has demolished the White King's pawn fence, and he has completely paralyzed the entire enemy Queenside with his Queen. The White pieces are deployed so unhappily that they are utterly unable to bother the Black Queen. For example, 11. N–B1? Q–N3 12. Q–K1 B–B6 stalemating.

11. R–K1 O–O–O 12. P–N5 N–R4 13. B–N4 N–B5 14. P–QR4

Belated counterplay.

14. . . . PxP! 15. P–R5

On 15. NxP Black wins with 15. . . . Q–B4 16. B–B3 P–KR4!

15. . . . BxPch! 16. KxB N–K6!

An elegant final blow. 17. PxN would be countered with 17. . . . QxPch and 18. . . . RxQ, and 17. Q–N3 with . . . NxB.

17. N–R3 NxQch 18. QRxN P–B6 19. N–B1 Q–B4 20. B–R1 Q–B5!, White resigned.

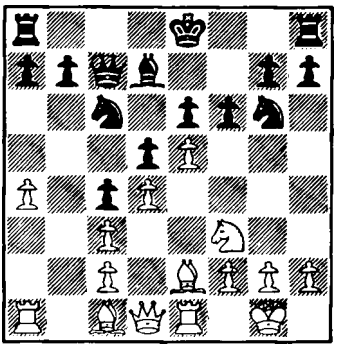
The Complex Sacrifice

In the previous chapters we discussed in detail the most widespread types of genuine sacrifice occurring in the opening phase of the chess game: developing (the main type), pursuing, preventive, and retarding. The many examples given convincingly show that genuine sacrifices in the opening as a rule exert a great impact on the subsequent events in the game. It is extremely important therefore to determine the true nature of the sacrifice and its place in the overall chess classification if we are to understand the underlying ideas and dynamics of the game. In the games cited, that was an easy task. However, practice sometimes features complex, multifaceted true sacrifices based on a variety of themes and ideas. Sacrifices of this sort lend themselves to classification only with difficulty. The original idea of a sacrifice is often gradually transformed into another.

1ST MATCH GAME

Denver, 1971

Larsen



Fischer

13. B–R3! PxP?!

Highly risky, but the White Bishop had to be prevented from invading Q6.

14. PxP N/BxP 15 NxN NxN 16. Q–Q4! N–N3 17. B–R5!

Ignoring the possibility of capturing the Black pawn: 17. QxNP is countered with . . . O–O–O giving Black counterplay, whereas now castling does no good on account of 18. QxRP.

17. . . . K–B2 18. P–B4 KR–K1 19. P–B5! PxP 20. QxQPch K–B3

Bad is 20. . . . B–K3 due to 21. RxB! RxR 22. QxPch. Also bad is 20. . . . R–K3 in view of 21. QxPch R–B3 22. R–K7ch.

21. B–B3

The situation now on the board invites a *sacrifice of pursuit*. The subsequent developments in the game occur against the background of this kind of sacrifice, White taking the initiative and ultimately winning. The foregoing example stresses the difficulty of working out a clear-cut classification of sacrifices.

The original idea of a sacrifice inherently contains a bouquet

of various sacrificial themes. In such cases, we have the right to classify the sacrifice in the opening as "complex."

3RD MATCH GAME

U.S.S.R.,–Odessa, 1974

ENGLISH OPENING

Korchnoi *Petrosian*

1. P–QB4 N–KB3 2. N–QB3 P–K3 3. N–B3 P–QN3 4. P–K4 B–N2 5. Q–K2

A year later, Romanishin played even more strongly against Petrosian: 5. B–Q3!

5. . . . P–B4?! 6. P–K5 N–N1

The "reverse" pattern of development is generally speaking frowned upon by theory, but in certain cases it is justified by concrete positional considerations. Thus, in the final candidates match (1974), Karpov played 5. . . . B–N5! 6. P–K5 N–N1 against Korchnoi, transferring his Knight to a more flexible K2. 5. . . . P–QB4?, which weakens Q3 and Q4, does nothing to facilitate that maneuver: Black only loses time and falls behind in development.

7. P–Q4! BxN?

Exactly what White has been looking forward to.

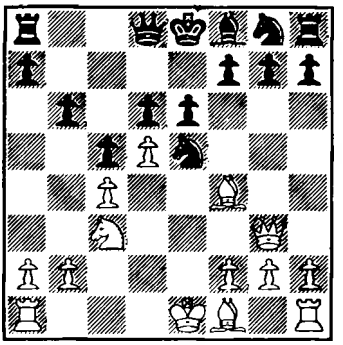
8. QxB N–QB3

Is there any way to hold the center?

9. P–Q5!

White simply sacrifices the central pawn.

9. . . . NxP 10. Q–N3 P–Q3 11. B–B4



An edge in development is the first tangible result of the sacrifice. But at least as important is the fact that Black can no longer complete his development without creating new weaknesses in his camp.

11. . . . N–N3 12. PxP PxP 13. O–O–O!

Starting strong pressure on Black's "hanging" pawns on Q3 and K3.

13. . . . NxB 14. QxN P–N3

On 14. . . . N–B3 Korchnoi recommended 15. P–KN3 B–K2 16. B–N2 R–B1 17. KR–K1, stepping up his pressure.

15. Q–K4! N–B3

Capitulation since the loss of two pawns is inevitable. On 15. . . . K–B2 there follows 16. Q–N7ch! N–K2 17. N–K4 with a rout—a situation typical of a preventive sacrifice.

16. QxKPch Q–K2 17. RxP QxQ 18. RxQch K–B2 19. R–QB6 and White realized his material advantage step by step.

"Synthetic" sacrifices, like the one in the preceding game, are usually manifestations of a sophisticated and deep strategic plan.

CHAPTER IX

The Strategic Sacrifice

This type of sacrifice is based on positional-strategic considerations: to seize a strategically important point or line, to disrupt the opponent's pawn structure, and the like. The appraisal of the positions as they arise is of primary importance; calculation of variations is secondary. In other words, the strategic sacrifice is an extreme case of a true sacrifice, containing a minimum of dynamic elements. Being essentially different from a combination pseudo-sacrifice, the strategic sacrifice is characteristic of the middlegame, whose wealth of ideas and plans provides a fertile soil for it. Nevertheless, several kinds of strategic sacrifice exist in the opening—at the decisive stage of the opening battle. These are invariably associated with the center squares and the opponent's pawn structure.

The Blockading Sacrifice

The center squares very often constitute the bone of contention in the opening. The side that succeeds in controlling these squares holds sway in the subsequent middlegame. This is the reason for a widely popular maneuver aimed at occupying a secure stronghold in the center at the expense of a minor sacrifice. Usually this post is manned by the Knight, exerting strong pressure on the opponent's position. Sacrifices of this nature may be called "blockading."

U.S.S.R. CHAMPIONSHIP

Leningrad, 1956

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Boleslavsky *Lisitsyn*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–Q3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–KN3 6. B–K3 B–N2 7. P–B3 O–O 8. Q–Q2 N–B3 9. O–O–O NxN

Another possibility is a gambit sacrifice, 9. . . . P–Q4!, which is why modern theory regards the main variation of the Rauzer Attack as acceptable for Black.

10. BxN Q–R4 11. K–N1

A lot of water has flown under the bridges. Today, 11. B–B4 B–K3 12. B–N3 is considered the strongest continuation.

11. . . . P–K4! 12. B–K3 B–K3 13. P–QR3 KR–Q1

More accurate is 13. . . . QR–Q1! with adequate play for Black: on 14. N–N5 QxQ 15. RxQ there would follow 15. . . . P–Q4.

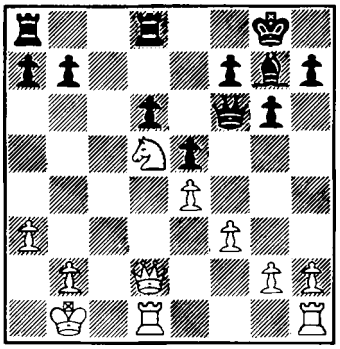
14. N–N5 Q–R5?

Another, and this time very serious, positional error. The "fork" on QB7 that Black feared in the variation 14. . . . QxQ 15. RxQ P–Q4 16. N–B7 is not too dangerous: 16. . . . QR–B1 17. NxB PxN and Black has satisfactory play. But it was not so easy to foresee the following brilliant strategic sacrifice.

15. P–QB4!! BxP 16. N–B3 Q–N6 17. BxB QxB 18. B–N5!

An important element of White's strategy: the only Black minor piece controlling the weakened Q5-square is exchanged.

18. . . . Q–K3 19. BxN QxB 20. N–Q5



Now the results of the strategic sacrifice are clear: the White Knight has occupied a dominating and totally unassailable position, controlling the vital squares and completely dwarfing the Black Bishop. White has every chance of mounting a direct attack on the castling position of his opponent.

20. . . . Q–R5 21. Q–K2 B–B1

Passive play dooms Black. White would face more difficult tasks after 21. . . . P–B4, though in that case 22. P–KN3 Q–R6 23. R–QB1 was possible with the unpleasant threat of R–B7.

22. Q–B1! QR–B1 23. P–KN3 Q–N4 24. P–KR4!

The KRP is a powerful battering ram. Now nothing can help Black—White's attack is devastating.

24. . . . Q–R3 (24. . . . QxNP? 25. R–R3!) **25. P–KN4 P–KN4 26. PxP QxP 27. R–R5 Q–N3 28. P–N5! P–KR3 29. RxP!**

The triumph of White's strategy. The Rook is again invulnerable due to the check on K7.

29. . . . QxNP 30. R–R5! Black resigned.

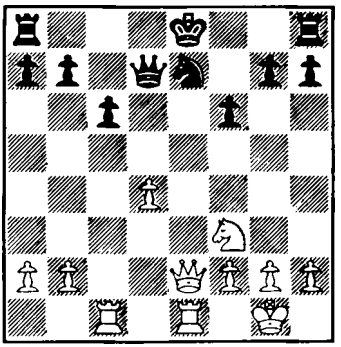
The Liberating Sacrifice

There is a well-known strategic pawn sacrifice whereby a center pawn advances and sacrifices itself to liberate an important blockading square. Usually a Knight, the star of all blockading operations, immediately establishes his claim to this square. Hence this

sacrifice has the same objective as a blockading one, but it is effected in a different manner.

These sacrifices are called liberating. They usually occur in the middlegame, but sometimes in the opening too (most often during the transition from the opening to the middlegame). This technique has been known from time immemorial. Thus, it occurred in the celebrated Steinitz–Bardeleben game, Hastings 1895. In that game, the world champion, who had just surrendered the crown to Emmanuel Lasker, carried out a combination of fantastic beauty which has adorned the chess treasury ever since. The combination was ushered in by a strategic pawn sacrifice.

Bardeleben



Steinitz

17. P–Q5!

"Since my opponent cannot castle and the K6-square is weakened, the Knight on Q4 will occupy a very strong position. Moreover, the QR will also join the attack from QB1. To achieve this, I am prepared to sacrifice a pawn." In all likelihood, Wilhelm Steinitz reasoned thus or nearly thus before his 17th move. I do not see how he could envisage the complicated combination that was to follow (as some authors maintain); indeed, there was no point in exercising his powers of clairvoyance. The operation 17. P–Q5 PxP 18. N–Q4 is in itself convincing enough.

17. . . . PxP

After 17. . . . K–B2 18. PxP PxP 19. Q–B4ch Q–Q4 20. QxQch

PxQ 21. R–B7 Black has a lost position. Hence he cannot help but accept the offering.

18. N–Q4! K–B2 19. N–K6!

Examining this game we again see how formidable is the Knight's position on K6 if supported by the major pieces.

19. . . . KR–QB1 20. Q–N4 P–KN3 21. N–N5ch K–K1 22. RxNch!!

The overture to the combination. It is interesting to note that after that stunning blow the German master quietly left the tournament hall without making the reply move, and a loss was entered against him. The sixty-year-old ex-champion of the world, having conducted his attack with youthful exuberance, demonstrated a forced win: 22. . . . K–B1 (the capture of the Rook spells defeat) 23. R–B7ch! K–N1 24. R–N7ch K–R1 25. RxPch K–N1 26. R–N7ch K–R1 27. Q–R4ch KxR 28. Q–R7ch K–B1 29. Q–R8ch K–K2 30. Q–N7ch K–K1 31. Q–N8ch K–K2 32. Q–B7ch K–Q1 33. Q–B8ch Q–K1 34. N–B7ch K–Q2 35. Q–Q6 mate.

This remarkable game is a classic specimen of a positional center-pawn sacrifice followed by the seizure of the blockade square Q4 and an attack on the Kingside. The mentioned sequence of events is more or less typical, since the seizure of an important square (Q4) in itself, unaccompanied by real threats on the Kingside or in the center, may prove to be insufficient compensation for the center pawn. The activity of the White pieces and the weakness of the critical squares KB5 or K6 constitute the most important criteria for judging whether the strategic sacrifice in the opening is correct or not.

Here is an example from modern practice confirming this idea.

Leningrad, 1950

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

Spassky — *Avtonomov*

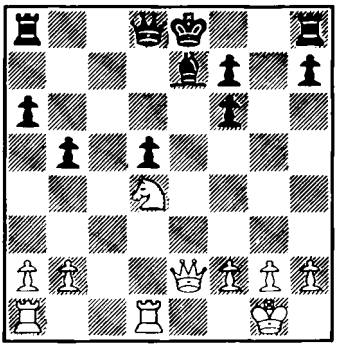
1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 N–KB3 4. P–K3 P–B4 5. BxP P–K3 6. O–O P–QR3 7. Q–K2 P–QN4 8. B–N3 N–B3 9. N–B3 PxP 10. R–Q1 B–N2? 11. PxP N–QN5

Playing a minutely studied variation of Queen's Gambit Accepted, Black sticks to the traditional plan of retardation and of blockading the isolated pawn on Q4 but makes a fundamental error in neglecting to develop his Kingside. Correct is 10. . . . B–K2 11. PxP N–QR4! In that case, the advance of the pawn presents no danger: if 12. P–Q5, then 12. . . . NxB 13. PxP Q–R4 or 12. B–B2 B–N2.

12. P–Q5! N/NxQP 13. B–N5 B–K2 14. BxN/6!

That is the whole point: the pins along the central files force Black to weaken his pawn structure.

14. . . . PxB 15. NxN BxN 16. BxB PxB 17. N–Q4!



The Knight on Q4 is superb! Actually it is on top of the situation since it controls virtually the entire board, particularly the KB5-square vital to the attack. Black cannot escape a rout.

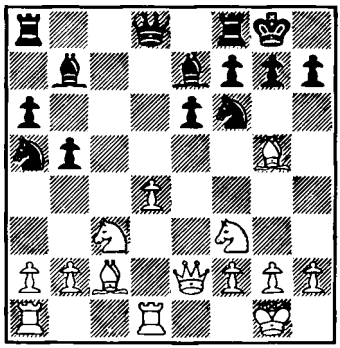
17. . . . K–B1 18. N–B5 P–KR4 19. RxP! QxR 20. QxBch K–N1 21. QxP, Black resigned.

Besides the weak KB5- and K6-squares, the success of the strategic pawn sacrifice hinges on other positional and dynamic factors. In this sense, the essentially strategic pawn sacrifice may approach the combinational inasmuch as calculation of concrete variations as events unfold becomes a must. In the foregoing examples, White's operations were irreproachably correct: the advantages garnered from the sacrifice proved sizable enough, Black's counterplay insubstantial. But this is not always so. In the twentieth game of the Botvinnik–Petrosian Match (1963), White

rejected a tempting sacrifice of a center pawn, possibly because its aftereffect was far less clear.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 PxP 3. N–KB3 N–KB3 4. P–K3 P–B4 5. BxP P–K3 6. O–O P–QR3 7. B–N3 N–B3 8. Q–K2 PxP 9. R–Q1 B–K2 10. PxP N–QR4 11. B–B2 P–QN4 12. N–B3 B–N2 13. B–N5 O–O



As distinct from the previous game, Black has taken control of Q4 and has also managed to castle. But the thematic pawn sacrifice is still possible and leads to very interesting play. Let us make a brief analysis.

14. P–Q5!? PxP

White benefits from 14. . . . NxP 15. RxN! and 14. . . . BxP 15. NxB PxN 16. N–Q4 with the threats 17. P–QN4 and 17. N–B5.

15. N–Q4 P–N3

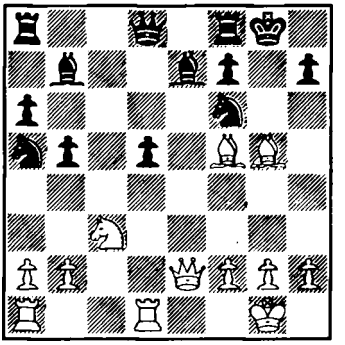
It would be very dangerous to allow the Knight to reach KB5. For instance, 15. . . . R–K1 16. N–B5 B–KB1 17. Q–Q3 threatening 18. N–R6ch!

16. N–B5!

This piece sacrifice destroys Black's position and results in a strong attack for White. Characteristically, White can hardly prove the soundness of the strategic pawn sacrifice in a quiet way. This is not the first time that we have encountered such a turn of events.

What was initially conceived as a modest plan of sacrificing a pawn to seize the Q4-square logically blossomed into a battle full of adventure and mutual danger.

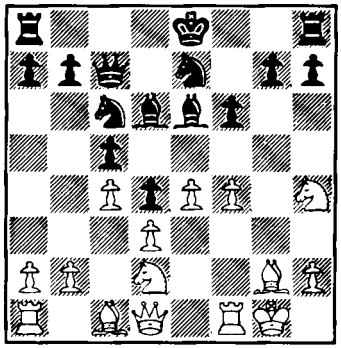
16. . . . PxN 17. BxP



The Black King is in danger. On 17. . . . N–K5 the decisive reply is 18. B–R6!, and on 17. . . . B–B1 a very strong response is 18. B–B2! B–K3 19. R–Q3 with a mounting attack. Possibly the best continuation is 17. . . . R–K1 18. Q–B3 B–B1 19. BxPch! NxB! 20. BxQ QRxB. Black has three minor pieces for the Queen, which could become a great power if they pool forces. But one of them is destined to fall after 21. Q–N3ch B–N2 22. Q–B7. Whether or not the counterplay 22. . . . N–B5 23. QxB NxNP is adequate is up to the readers to decide.

The liberating strategic pawn sacrifice is a commonplace phenomenon in complicated strategic openings, particularly in a number of variations of King's Indian Attack, King's Indian Defense, and Modern Benoni. Here is a very simple example.

Pomar



Botvinnik

Varna, 1962

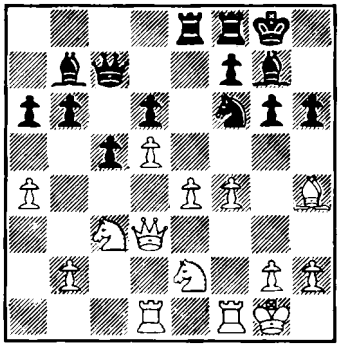
If there any way to keep the KB4-pawn? The variations 12. Q–B3 N–N3 and 12. N–N3 N–N3 13. Q–R5 O–O–O favor Black. But there is another, radical solution:

12. P–K5! PxP 13. P–B5 B–B2 14. N–K4 O–O–O 15. Q–N4

As a result, White has obtained an overwhelming position, controlling the large diagonal and an excellent outpost on K4. Moreover, Black has to let go of the extra pawn.

Let us consider now a more complicated case.

Zuk



Spassky
After 17. . . QR–K1

Canada, 1971

The position in the diagram arose after the following:

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–KN3 3. N–B3 B–N2 4. P–K4 P–Q3 5. P–B3 O–O 6. B–K3 P–N3 7. B–Q3 B–N2 8. KN–K2 P–B4 9. P–Q5 P–K3 10. B–N5 P–KR3 11. B–R4 PxP 12. BPxP QN–Q2 13. O–O P–R3 14. P–R4 N–K4? (14. . . . Q–B2) **15. P–B4! NxB 16. QxN Q–B2 17. QR–Q1 QR–K1**

There followed:

18. BxN! BxB 19. P–K5! PxP 20. N–K4! B–N2 21. P–B5! R–Q1 22. N/2–B3!

Having sacrificed the center pawn, White has obtained an ideal attacking position, controlling the crucial squares in the center—above all, with the "brave" Knight on K4—and able to step up the pressure any time. And Black, though holding the advantage of two Bishops, has no serious counterplay. It should be noted in passing that two securely centralized Knights are at least as strong as the opponent's two Bishops and often stronger, particularly if the attacker creates Kingside threats to supplement his center efforts, as in this example.

22. . . . PxP

Otherwise Black would have to contend with the perennial threat P–B6.

23. RxP P–B3 24. QR–KB1

Now White switches all attention to the weak pawn on B6.

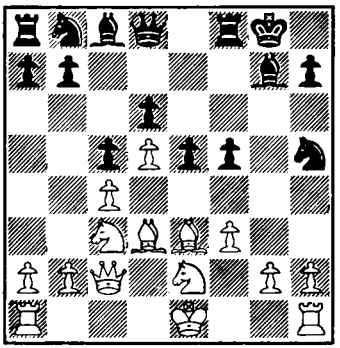
24. . . . Q–K2 25. Q–N3 K–R1 26. Q–R4! BxP 27. NxP!?

Perhaps stronger is 27. RxP! BxN 28. NxB, and on . . . R–Q5 29. RxRPch BxR 30. QxPch (but not 30. QxQ? B–K6ch 31. N–B2 RxN!) 30. . . . K–N1 31. NxPch with an attack.

27. . . . B–N2 28. R–R5! RxN 29. RxPch! K–N1 30. R/1xR BxR 31. RxB and White won, but Black could certainly have mounted stiffer resistance.

A more interesting and tense struggle followed the thematic breakthrough in the next game (this time the Sämisch Variation of King's Indian Defense).

Gligoric



Kotov

Zurich, 1953

With his last move, 11. Q–B2, White took aim at the pawn on KB5 and the strategically important diagonal QN1–KR7 and prepared for castling long as well. But this move also has a significant drawback: it restricts the mobility of the Bishop on Q3 and allows a breakthrough in the center. For this reason, 11. Q–Q2 is stronger in order to be able to counter 11. . . . P–K5 with 12. B–N5!

11. . . . P–K5! 12. PxP P–B5!

The most important element of Black's plan: the KBP is advanced with a tempo.

13. B–B2 N–Q2

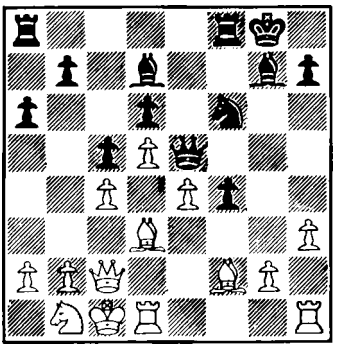
And that actually takes care of the whole combination. Black has relinquished a center pawn to seize a very convenient and powerful base on K4, simultaneously activating the "King's Indian Bishop" and completely obstructing the White Bishop on Q3. An attempt to disentangle the latter by means of a countersacrifice, 14. P–K5 (which, incidentally, is always a move to be reckoned with), allows Black to keep the initiative with material equality: 14. P–K5

NxP 15. BxPch K–R1 16. B–K4 (otherwise 16. . . . P–B6! follows!) 16. . . . NxBP 17. O–O–O P–QN4!

14. N–KN1 Q–N4! 15. B–B1 N–K4 16. N–B3 Q–K2 17. NxN QxN 18. O–O–O

White has succeeded in cushioning part of the blow by exchanging the powerful Knight on K4 and withdrawing his King from the center. But in the meantime Black is prepared to open up the QB-file for a direct attack. White still faces persistent defensive problems with no prospects of serious counterplay. The power and depth of the strategic sacrifice 11. . . . P–K5 are obvious, and the game would not merit further consideration were it not for a second sacrifice on the same theme that followed several moves later.

18. . . . N–B3 19. P–KR3 B–Q2 20. B–Q3 P–QR3 21. N–N1!



White's defense is very tenacious and resourceful. 21. . . . P–N4 would be followed by 22. N–Q2 with the threat 23. N–B3. But Black pulls another trick out of his hat.

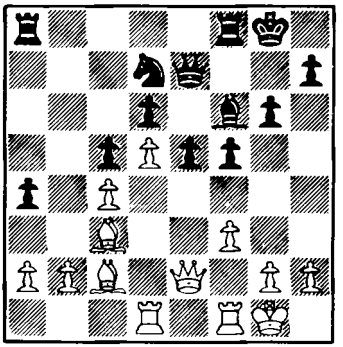
21. . . . P–B6!

White's plans are in a state of collapse. With a liberating sacrifice Black creates a new convenient outpost for his pieces—this time on KB5—opens up the QB1–KR6 diagonal, and denies the White Knight its favorite KB3-square. Though two pawns down, Black controls all the crucial squares and secures a position of supremacy for a long time to come.

22. PxP N–R4 23. N–Q2 N–B5 24. B–B1 P–N4 25. P–KR4 K–R1 26. R–N1 B–B3 (avoiding the sacrifice of the Exchange) **27. N–N3 QR–N1 28. B–K1! P–N5** (otherwise B–B3 follows) **29. K–N1 R–R1 30. B–N3 R–KN1 31. Q–R2 RxB 32. RxR N–K7 33. QxN QxR 34. N–B1 P–QR4 35. N–Q3 B–Q5 36. P–R5 Q–R5 37. B–N2 R–KN1** (The conflict has shifted to the Kingside. The strong configuration of his pieces gives Black adequate counterchances.) **38. R–R1 Q–N6 39. B–B1 P–R5 40. K–B2 P–R6 41. P–N3, draw.**

Of course, this kind of situation may arise in other opening systems as well.

Geller



Pilnik

Göteborg, 1955

In this position arising from the Sicilian, a typical liberating sacrifice of a center pawn followed:

22. . . . P–K5! 23. BxB QxB 24. PxP P–B5! 25. R–B2

In case of a pawn countersacrifice, 25. P–K5 NxKP 26. B–K4 QR–N1, White can hardly hope to improve his chances given the weak pawns on QN2 and QB4.

25. . . . N–K4!

The reader is well advised to note the absolute superiority of the Knight over the Bishop. Clearly, White's extra pawn does not even provide consolation.

26. QR–KB1 Q–R5 27. B–Q1 R–B2 28. Q–B2 P–N4 29. Q–B3 QR–KB1 30. P–KR3 P–R4 31. B–K2 P–N5!

Having concentrated all his forces on the Kingside, Black literally explodes the opponent's castling position.

32. RxP RxR 33. RxR RxR 34. P–N3 N–B6ch 35. K–B2 QxP 36. PxR P–N6ch 37. KxN P–N7ch 38. K–B2 Q–R7!, White resigned.

We can conclude that a liberating sacrifice in the opening (like the ones discussed above) is a highly effective weapon in the fight for the initiative. Effective control over the group of squares in the possible target area can be recommended as a precautionary measure.

Deformation of the Pawn Chain

Another motive for a strategic pawn sacrifice in the opening may be to deform the opponent's center pawns, depriving the pawn formation of its flexibility or rendering it totally impotent. As we have already seen, this disruptive effort in the opening is usually associated with the idea of retardation. But the active side may also pursue a more prosaic goal, namely, to create pawn weaknesses that can be exploited later in the game, even as late as the endgame. Numerous opening systems contain such ideas.

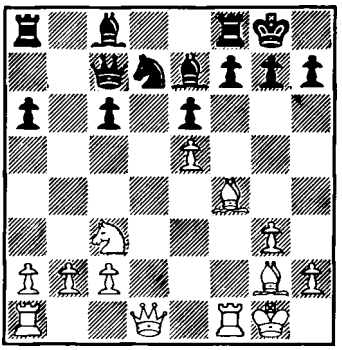
XIV OLYMPIAD

Leipzig, 1960

SICILIAN DEFENSE

Tal *Darga*

1. P–K4 P–QB4 2. N–KB3 P–K3 3. P–Q4 PxP 4. NxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 P–Q3 6. P–KN3 P–QR3 7. B–N2 Q–B2 8. O–O B–K2 9. P–B4 N–B3 (better is 9. . . . QN–Q2) **10. NxN PxN 11. P–K5 PxP 12. PxP N–Q2 13. B–B4 O–O**



Black attacks the pawn on K5 and indirectly the pawn on N2 (threatening 14. . . . Q–N3 and . . . QxNP).

14. N–K4!

It is dangerous to capture the pawn on QN2: 14. . . . Q–N3ch 15. K–R1 QxP 16. N–Q6 with the initiative for White. But what is to be done about the pawn on K5? Admittedly Black can capture it, easily reinforcing the pinned Knight; yet the German master did not venture to make this move.

14. . . . B–N2 15. Q–R5 P–N3 16. Q–K2 P–QB4 17. N–B6ch with an attack for White.

Let us hear what Tal has to say on this point: "Capturing the pawn on K5 with 14. . . . NxP leads to a difficult endgame after 15. Q–Q4 P–B3 16. BxN QxB 17. QxQ PxQ 18. RxRch KxR 19. R–B1ch, and Black's extra pawn brings him a lot of trouble as both Bishops are restricted. Perhaps Black would have contrived to achieve a draw in this ending, but playing such a position is no one's delight."

This is something new for us: sacrificing a pawn to go into the endgame! Such is the peculiar nature of this type of sacrifice which seeks to destroy the opponent's pawns. The sacrifice is particularly fearsome if the opponent has an isolated pair of doubled pawns in the center, as in the variation cited by Tal.

Israel, 1975

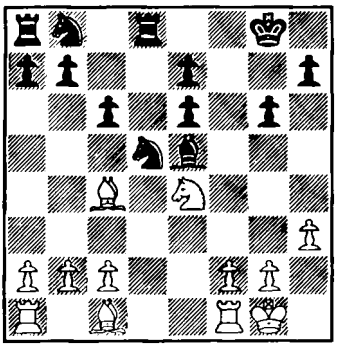
PIRC DEFENSE

Shamkovich *Berenstein*

1. P–K4 P–Q3 2. P–Q4 N–KB3 3. N–QB3 P–KN3 4. N–B3 B–N2 5. B–K2 O–O 6. O–O P–B3 7. P–KR3 Q–B2 8. P–K5!? PxP 9. PxP R–Q1 10. Q–K1 N–Q4 11. B–QB4 B–K3?

Much stronger is Smyslov's move in a game with Shamkovich, Lone Pine 1976: 11. . . . N–R3!

12. N–KN5 QxP 13. QxQ BxQ 14. NxB PxN 15. N–K4



The doubled pawn on K3 spells a lot of trouble for Black in the future even if the position is simplified. The situation arising after this sacrifice is highly reminiscent of those we have encountered in Chapter VIII (Bronstein–Lyavdansky and Ilyin-Zhenevsky–Levenfish). But the similarity is only skin-deep. In those games White's primary goal is to retard the development of the opponent's pieces, whereas here the sacrifice is aimed, above all, at exploiting the weakness of the pawn on K3 in the middlegame or even endgame phases.

15. . . . P–QN4?! 16. B–N3 B–B3 17. N–N5 BxN 18. BxB

Two Bishops here are obviously stronger than the opponent's pair of Knights. After a long and bitter fight White won.

Monaco, 1968

ENGLISH OPENING

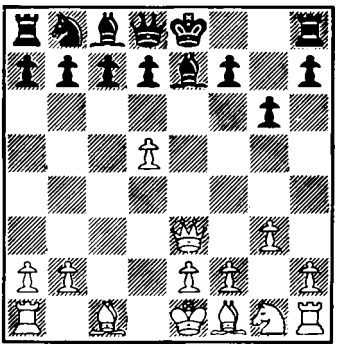
Larsen *Gheorghiu*

1. P–QB4 P–K4 2. P–KN3 P–KN3 3. P–Q4! PxP?! 4. QxP N–KB3 5. N–QB3 N–B3 6. Q–K3ch!

This check is the whole point of the White Queen's early movement into the limelight. After 6. . . . Q–K2 7. B–N2 White obtains a notch more freedom of maneuver, but Black is right in playing as he did. Nevertheless, adepts of King's Indian Defense reluctantly agree to exchange Queens.

6. . . . B–K2?! 7. N–Q5! NxN 8. PxN N–N1

Black also faces difficulties after 8. . . . N–N5 9. Q–B3 P–B3 (9. . . . O–O 10. B–KR6) 10. P–K4.



9. P–Q6! PxP 10. N–R3

Having sacrificed the pawn, White pins all his hopes on the marvelous outpost on Q5 as a jumping-off position for a direct attack on the opponent's weakened Kingside. But if the worse comes to the worst, White is prepared to forget about the attack and prosaically lay siege to the hopelessly weak pawn on Q3. White manages to pursue both these goals with success.

10. . . . O–O 11. Q–R6! N–B3 12. N–N5 BxN

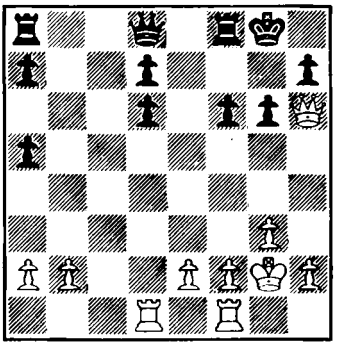
The exchange of Queens after 12. . . . Q–R4ch 13. B–Q2 BxN

14. QxB QxQ 15. BxQ results in a bad position inasmuch as the pawn on Q3 is doomed.

13. BxB P–B3 14. B–Q2 P–N3 15. B–N2 B–N2 16. O–O N–R4

To avoid White's increasing pressure, Black reconciles himself to new pawn weaknesses.

17. BxN BxB 18. KxB PxB 19. QR–Q1



A major-piece ending with numerous weak spots in the Black camp. After **19. . . . Q–K2 20. R–Q2 QR–N1 21. R/1–Q1 Q–K5ch 22. K–N1 R–N3 23. P–KR4 Q–K4 24. P–N3 R–B1 25. R–Q5! QxP 26. P–R5,** White's advantage has grown to sizable proportions in view of serious threats to the Black King.

Obviously, the above example can be classified under the category of *complex strategic sacrifices* set in motion in the opening and coming to fruition, on the basis of a different idea, in the middlegame or endgame.

CHAPTER X

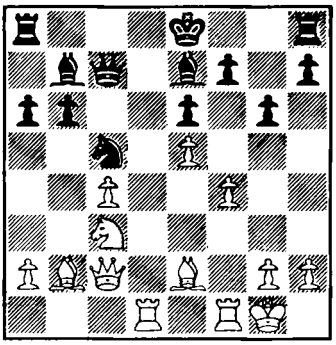
The Magnificent Eight

"The pawn is the soul of the game," maintained Philidor, the great French chess player. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the eight humble infantrymen lined up in a precise formation on the second rank at the beginning of the game. They are the first to go into action. At the same time, they are the most trusted defenders of any position and the first to experience the blows of combat. Every single major combination, attack, or sacrifice involves pawns. We have already seen that the sacrifice of the humblest combat unit is most difficult and calls for the highest degree of skill on the part of the player.

Hand in Hand

The center pawns are the stars of the opening. Unless blocked by the opponent's pawn formation and if actively supported by the pieces, they forge ahead, ramming the opponent's defenses or at the very least seriously disrupting the coordination of the opponent's pieces. The success of this operation hinges on many factors, such as the ability of the opponent to countersacrifice at the proper time, to mount a successful blocking operation, or to launch a counterattack, etc. The above theme underlies the idea of sacrificing a piece for two pawns to create a mobile pawn center, a significant element in many opening systems. As a rule, sacrifices of this kind are beyond the realm of typical opening sacrifices, discussed in the preceding chapters, since they are aimed at a specific goal at the climax of the opening development stage.

Pfeiffer



Petrosian

Leipzig, 1960

Wary of the P–B5 breakthrough, the German master played a preventive P–KN3. This prophylaxis, however, only enhanced the danger of the Knight sacrifice White conceived.

18. N–Q5!!

A crushing and unexpected sacrifice, which Black has to accept willy-nilly: on 18. . . . Q–B3 there follows 19. N–B6ch BxN 20. B–B3 with a clear advantage for White.

18. . . . PxN 19. PxP

The point of the sacrifice is well taken: White has formed a powerful pair of pawns in the center, and his Bishop on QN2 has been infused with enormous strength. Black's position is hopeless: a countersacrifice will hardly go very far toward "placating" White.

19. . . . Q–B1 20. P–K6 O–O 21. Q–B3 P–B3 22. P–Q6 N–R5 23. QxQ KRxQ 24. B–R1

The exchange of Queens serves no useful purpose: there is no stopping the White pawns.

24. . . . R–B7 25. PxB RxB 26. R–Q8ch K–N2 27. R–QB1! (defusing the threat . . . RxPch and bringing the second Rook up into the attack) **27. . . . RxKP 28. R–B7! K–R3 29. BxP B–K5 30. B–N5ch, Black resigned.**

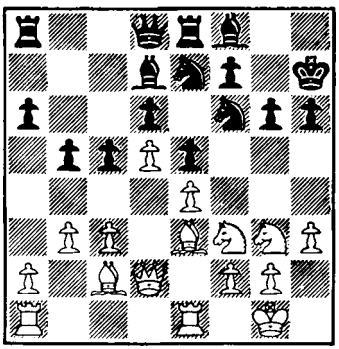
A more sophisticated piece sacrifice with a lot more creative risk appears in the following game. From the formal point of view White's sacrifice takes place in the middlegame, but this is only appearance—actually the opening battle was not yet over.

Miscolc, 1963

RUY LOPEZ

Tal *Ghitescu*

1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–N5 P–QR3 4. B–R4 N–KB3 5. O–O B–K2 6. R–K1 P–QN4 7. B–N3 P–Q3 8. P–B3 O–O 9. P–KR3 P–R3 10. P–Q4 R–K1 11. QN–Q2 B–B1 12. N–B1 B–Q2 13. N–N3 N–QR4 14. B–B2 P–QB4 15. P–N3 P–N3 16. B–K3 N–B3 17. P–Q5 N–K2 (more cautious is 17. . . . N–R2) **18. Q–Q2 K–R2**



An almost typical position of a fashionable opening variation. After closing the center Black hopes to redeploy his forces and obtain a nearly impregnable position. Hundreds of games have been played in this vein. So Tal decides to cut the "Gordian knot" by sacrificing a piece for two pawns.

19. BxBP! PxB 20. NxP N–B1 21. P–KB4 (but not 21. NxBP due to . . . Q–K2 and the Knight falls) **21. . . . Q–K2 22. P–B4!** (fortifying the pawn on Q5).

The subsequent course of the game is highly characteristic: having prepared a swift pawn attack in the center, White skillfully combines it with Kingside threats, being in no hurry to recover the piece.

22. . . . B–N2 23. N–B3 PxP 24. PxP N–Q3 25. P–K5 NxBP 26. Q–B3 B–N4 27. QR–Q1 QR–Q1 28. P–Q6! NxQP 29. PxN Q–N2 30. N–K5 N–Q2 31. N–R5! B–R1 32. Q–KN3

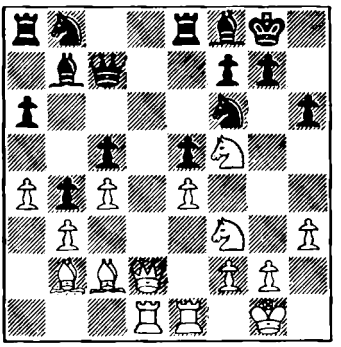
White's attack (now with full material equality) is irresistible.

32. . . . NxN 33. PxN Q–Q2 34. N–B4! BxP 35. BxPch K–R1 36. BxP B–Q5ch 37. RxB! and a few moves later Black laid down his arms.

REST OF THE WORLD vs. U.S.S.R.

Belgrade, 1970

Gligoric



Geller

This position emerged in one of the fashionable variations of the Ruy Lopez. With his last move 22. . . . N–N1 Black started the maneuver to transfer his Knight to Q5. This kind of "antidevelopment" in a complicated position (basically still in the opening) is often too risky. The Yugoslav grandmaster clearly underestimated the power of the sacrifice that followed.

23. NxKP! RxN 24. BxR QxB 25. P–B4! Q–K3

And here is the tactical motivation of White's plan: on 25. . . . Q–B6 there follows 26. Q–B1! N–R4 (the threat was the capture of the Queen with 27. R–Q3 or 27. R–K3) 27. P–K5! NxBP 28. R–K3 N–B3 29. K–R2 winning the straying Queen.

26. P–K5 N–K1

26. . . . N–K5 would make little difference in view of 27. RxN QxN 28. KR–K1 Q–R4 29. Q–Q3, etc. We may now add up the results of the sacrifice: the KP and KBP have driven away the most active Black pieces, and White's forces have occupied formidable attacking positions; the "Ruy Lopez Bishop" on QB2 attacking along the weakened QN1–KR7 diagonal is particularly impressive.

27. Q–Q3 P–N3 28. N–N3! N–QB3 29. P–B5!

This breakthrough decides the outcome of the duel. The White strategy is crowned with complete success.

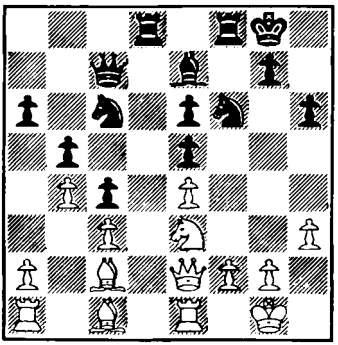
29. . . . PxP 30. NxP Q–N3

The threat was 31, N–K7ch.

31. Q–K2 Q–N4 32. P–R4! Q–B5 33. P–N3 winning the Queen. After **33. . . . QxKP 34. Q–N4ch Q–N2 35. NxQ, Black soon resigned.**

It should be noted at this juncture that the modern variations of the Ruy Lopez have furnished the most valuable material on the subject under consideration, Black sacrificing less often than White. Just recall the sensational Fischer–Kholmov game, Havana 1965, in which the following position arose:

Kholmov

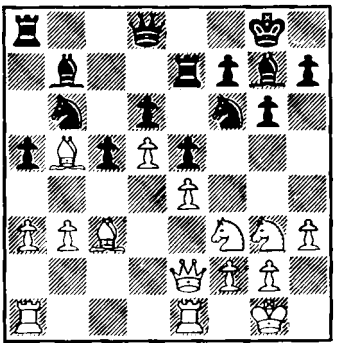


Fischer

With his last careless move, 19. P–QN4?, Fischer allowed a typical punch **19. . . . N–Q5!** There followed **20. PxN** (life is not sweet for White after 20. Q–B1 NxB 21. NxN R–Q6 either) **20. . . . PxP 21. P–R3 P–Q6 22. BxP RxB,** and Black recovered the piece and obtained an excellent position.

But this was a false though instructive sacrifice. Here is an example of a full-fledged true piece sacrifice for the sake of obtaining a mobile pawn center.

Gligoric



Jansa

Nice, 1974

Again a Ruy Lopez position.

22. . . . N/NxP! 23. PxN NxP 24. B–N2 Q–N3

Having liquidated White's pawn center, Black sets about preparing a victorious offensive of his pawn guard in the center. The plan is simplicity itself, but White actually has nothing to refute it with since no profitable countersacrifice is in the offing.

25. N–K4 N–B2 26. B–R4 P–Q4 (the attack is shaping up!) **27. N/4–Q2 P–K5 28. BxB KxB 29. N–R2 N–K3!**

Strengthening the position of his pieces and pawns still more for the decisive attack.

30. QR–B1 P–B4 31. P–B3

The sole means of bothering Black's menacing pawns: if 31. N/K–B1 P–KB5!, White faced the prospect of complete strangulation. However, the weakened diagonal starts to be felt.

31. . . . P–B5ch 32. Q–B2

32. K–R1 N–B5 33. Q–B1 (or 33. Q–K3 QxQ 34. RxQ P–Q5) could result in instant catastrophe because of . . . N–R4! However, the exchange of Queens brings White no respite. His trouble is not only the hyperactivity of his opponent's pawns but also the extremely poor pattern of deployment of his own pieces, particularly the Knight on R2 and the Bishop.

32. . . . QxQch 33. KxQ N–B4! 34. BPxP N–Q6ch 35. K–K2 NxRch 36. RxN PxNP 37. BxP B–R3ch

Now Black enjoys a small material advantage in addition to the ongoing attack.

38. K–K3 QPxP 39. R–B5 R–Q1 40. B–B4 BxB 41. NxB R–Q6ch 42. K–K2 R–QB6 43. N–B1 R–B7ch 44. K–K1 P–K6!

Not surprisingly, it is this very pawn that deals the enemy the coup de grâce. White resigned.

White's attack is just as strong after a piece sacrifice in the Gligoric–Minic game, Yugoslavian Championship, 1963, though in a different opening system, the King's Indian Defense. An interesting aside: the well-known variation employed by the players contained a singular subtlety which was not to be discovered until five years later.

1. P–Q4 N–KB3 2. P–QB4 P–Q3 3. N–QB3 P–KN3 4. N–B3 B–N2 5. P–KN3 O–O 6. B–N2 QN–Q2 7. O–O P–K4 8. P–K4 P–B3 9. P–KR3 Q–R4 10. B–K3 PxP 11. NxP N–N3 12. Q–Q3 Q–R3 13. P–N3 P–Q4

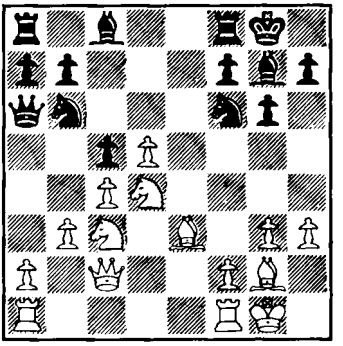
Black chose an active counterplay strategy typical of modern views on the King's Indian Defense.

14. Q–B2!

An unexpected move deserving an exclamation mark if only for

the audacity and originality of the concept. White gives his opponent the choice between a piece and a pawn. However, on **14. . . .** PxBP there would follow 15. P–QN4! and Black's Queen would find itself in a difficult situation.

14. . . . P–B4 15. KPxP



Black's reply is "obvious," isn't it? Minic continued **15. . . . PxN** only to come under pressure:

16. BxP R–Q1 17. KR–Q1 B–B4 18. Q–Q2 N–K1

The powerful QBP and QP and the formidable centralized position of White's pieces provide him with more than adequate compensation.

19. P–KN4 BxB 20. QxB B–Q2 21. P–B5 N–B1 22. P–Q6! and Black perished from "suffocation."

At the 18th Olympiad, Lugano 1968, the variation occurred in its entirety in Lengyel–Polugaevsky. Instead of the "obvious" but erroneous capture of a piece (15. . . . PxN), Polugaevsky continued **15. . . . KNxP!** and after **16. NxN NxN 17. BxN?** (better is 17. PxN) **17. . . . PxN 18. B–Q2 BxRP** emerged a pawn up. That innovation ruined the Yugoslav grandmaster's clever plan but failed to resolve the theoretical dispute. As a matter of fact, instead of 15. PxP stronger is 15. N/Q–N5! P–Q5 16. N–B7 Q–R4 17. NxR NxN (an interesting move is 17. . . . PxB!? with the sacrifice of an Exchange) 18. B–Q2 PxN 19. BxP and White has a beautiful position with only a minimal loss of material. Thus,

active support of the center pawns by the pieces is one of the main preconditions for the success of the "pawn roller" sacrifice.

Therefore, there are, naturally, limited possibilities for this kind of sacrifice early in the opening when most of the pieces have not yet gotten involved in the game. The opposition can rather more easily block these pawns or eliminate them by means of a counter-sacrifice. The following example is very interesting in this respect.

Moscow, 1956

GIUOCO PIANO

Bronstein *Royan*

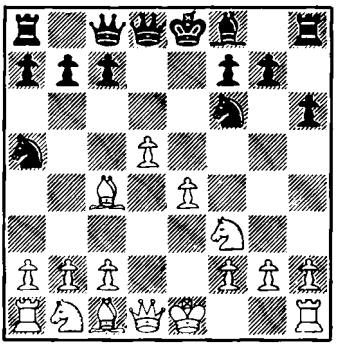
1. P–K4 P–K4 2. N–KB3 N–QB3 3. B–B4 N–B3 4. N–N5 P–Q4 5. PxP N–QR4 6. P–Q3

White's last move, introduced by none other than Morphy himself, is frowned upon by theoreticians. But Morphy stubbornly defended 6. P–Q3 though experts on this variation denounced it on account of 6. . . . P–KR3 7. N–B3 P–K5 8. Q–K2 NxB 9. PxN B–B4 and Black soon creates dangerous threats. Morphy himself seemingly confirmed the expert opinion in a series of brilliant wins for Black. Here is one of them: Arnou de Riviere–Morphy, Paris, 1863: 10. P–KR3 O–O 11. N–R2 N–R2 12. N–Q2 P–B4 13. N–N3 B–Q3 14. O–O BxPch 15. KxB P–B5! 16. QxKP N–N4 (or 17. Q–Q3 B–B4 18. Q–B3 Q–Q3) 17. Q–Q4 N–B6ch 18. PxN Q–R5 19. R–R1 BxRP 20. B–Q2 R–B3 and Black won.

But, if 6. P–Q3 is so bad, why did Morphy use it as liberally as he did? Alas, Morphy's own games furnish no answer to this question (after 6. . . . P–KR3 7. N–B3 nobody dared play 7. . . . P–K5 with him).

Grandmaster Bronstein decided to try and solve this psychological riddle.

6. . . . P–KR3 7. N–KB3 P–K5 8. PxP!!?



Here is what the author of this stunning innovation has to say: "Having embarked upon a path of aggression with B–B4 and N–N5, White must be prepared to sacrifice a piece, if need be. Possibly, this is exactly what Morphy had in mind when playing 6. P–Q3." In our view, this assumption seems entirely probable: the sacrifice brings into being a position which Morphy would have loved. Besides, the sacrifice of a piece at the very beginning of the game with a distant prospect of a pawn onslaught through the center is in itself extremely interesting.

8. . . . NxB 9. Q–Q4 N–N3 10. P–B4 P–B4? 11. Q–Q3 B–N5 12. QN–Q2 B–K2 13. O–O O–O (better is 13. . . . BxN) **14. N–K5 B–R4 15. P–QN3 QN–Q2 16. B–N2 NxN 17. BxN N–Q2 18. B–B3 B–B3 19. QR–K1 BxB 20. QxB Q–B3 21. P–K5 Q–B4 22. P–B4**

The advance of the White pawns over a wide front proved irresistible.

22. . . . B–N3 23. N–K4 QR–N1 24. Q–B3 B–R2 25. P–KN4 Q–N3 26. P–B5! (a remarkably well-orchestrated all-out attack) **26. . . . Q–N3 27. Q–KN3 P–B3 28. P–K6 N–K4 29. P–KR4!** (the final pawn attack) **29. . . . K–R1 30. P–N5 QR–B1 31. K–R1 Q–Q1 32. P–N6 BxP 33. PxB** and Black soon overstepped the time limit.

This fabulous game was awarded a special prize by *Chess in the USSR* Magazine as the best game of the year 1956.

Undoubtedly Black did not utilize all the time available to him to prepare for the opponent's pawn advance. Let us have a look at the position in the last diagram. White has just started developing his pieces, and it is doubtful that the position allows of such

an audacious sacrifice. Instead of 10. . . . P–B4? augmenting the power of White's pawns, much stronger is 10. . . . B–N5ch 11. N–B3 (scarcely better is 11. QN–Q2) 11. . . . O–O 12. O–O P–QB3 threatening to destroy the opponent's pawn center (this plan was recommended by Panov in his book *A Course in the Openings*). Here are some sample variations: (*a*) 13. P–B5 BxN 14. PxB PxP! 15. P–K5 N–K5 16. PxN RPxP!; (*b*) 13. P–K5 N–K1 14. P–Q6 P–KB3 15. P–B5 BxN 16. PxB N–Q4 17. P–QB4 PxP. In the former, Black hands back the piece to obtain a good position; in the latter, he firmly blocks the White pawns.

So strictly speaking, Bronstein's idea cannot be accepted as correct. Nevertheless, its methodological value is undeniable. Also praiseworthy is Bronstein's attempt to revive an ancient and long-canonized opening variation.

The Heroic Loner

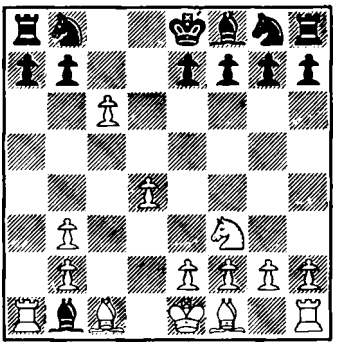
The most remarkable property of the pawn is its ability to turn into a piece upon reaching the eighth rank. However, this theme usually occurs in the endgame or during the transition from the middlegame to the endgame. We have seen that even two terribly strong center pawns can scarcely ever reach the seventh and eighth ranks with impunity, since the opponent will stop at nothing to block their advance. And the odds against a single pawn, no matter how strong, pulling this trick are accordingly higher. Nevertheless, there are several games and variations, which belong to the collection of chess curiosities, in which a heroic loner using certain tactical feints manages to break through to the last rank as early as in the opening. Here are a couple of examples.

Karlsbad, 1911

SLAV DEFENSE

Schlechter — *Perlis*

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. N–KB3 B–B4 3. P–B4 P–QB3 4. Q–N3 Q–N3?! 5. PxP QxQ 6. PxQ BxN (since 6. . . . PxP 7. N–B3 P–K3 8. N–QN5 is in White's favor) **7. PxP!!**



This unexpected move is rooted in a brilliant idea: 7. . . . B–K5 (defending against the threat of 8. PxP, winning a Rook) 8. RxP!! PxR 9. P–B7 and the pawn turns into a Queen. Black played 7. . . . **NxP 8. RxB P–K3** and was left minus one pawn.

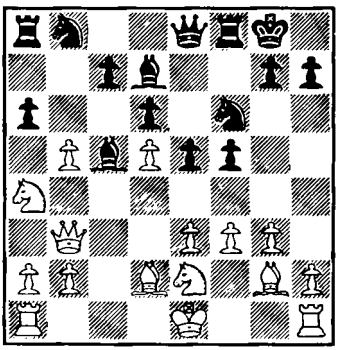
A variation of the Albin Counter Gambit.

1. P–Q4 P–Q4 2. P–QB4 P–K4 3. PxKP P–Q5 4. P–K3? (4. N–KB3 or 4. P–QR3) **4. . . . B–N5ch 5. B–Q2 PxP! 6. BxB PxPch 7. K–K2 PxN=Nch!** (that's right, the Knight: if 7. . . . QxQch 8. KxQ PxN=Q 9. RxQ, White has a good position) **8. RxN** (after 8. K–K1 Q–R5ch 9. K–Q2 Q–B7ch, Black has three Knights and, of course, a won position) **8. . . . B–N5ch,** winning the Queen.

Modern practice shows very few examples of a pawn's swift breakthrough as far as the seventh or even eighth rank in the opening. But it would be foolish to ignore this potential danger in complicated and sharp positions. Here is a funny example.

9TH GAME MATCH, 1951

Bronstein

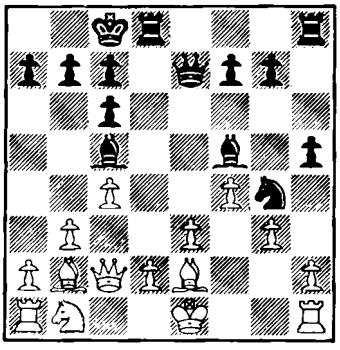


Botvinnik

Bled, 1961

In this position, Black artlessly played 14. . . . B–R2? (14. . . . B–N3!), which was countered with 15. P–N6! BxR (the exchange on QN6 is to White's advantage) 16. P–N7 BxQ 17. PxR=Q B–N3 18. PxB and White found himself a Rook(!) up though in a rather intricate position. Subsequently, Botvinnik played poorly and the game ended in a draw.

An unprecedentedly deep and graphic example of the triumph of a lone pawn is illustrated by the sensational game Larsen–Spassky, Rest of the World vs. U.S.S.R., Belgrade, 1970:



11. . . . P–KR5!

This pawn is headed for a dazzling career.

12. P–KR3

Objectively stronger is 12. P–KR4, but, for one thing, this move would mark positional capitulation (the Black Knight's position is too strong). Besides, could anyone foresee the fantastic course the game was to take?! On 12. N–B3 Spassky was prepared with 12. . . . RxP!! 13. QxR BxP with an all-powerful attack. It is interesting to note that the White Knight, together with the entire Queenside, remain passive onlookers till the very dramatic end.

12. . . . P–R5! 13. PxN

On 13. BxN there would follow 13. . . . BxB 14. PxB PxP!, just as it happened in the game.

13. . . . PxP! 14. R–N1 R–R8!!

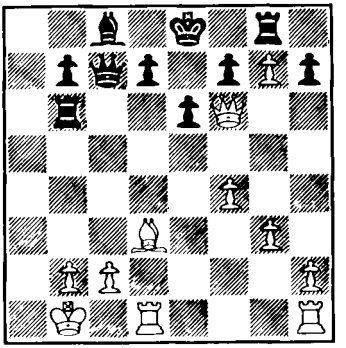
Probably the most brilliant move in this unique game: to pave the way for the brave pawn's running to queen, Black brings another offering to the sacrificial altar—this time a whole Rook!

15. RxR P–N7 16. R–B1

White is willing to surrender "half the kingdom" for the pawn, the more so since after 16. R–N1 Q–R5ch 17. K–Q1 Q–R8 no force in the world would be able to bar the pawn from becoming a second Queen.

16. . . . Q–R5ch 17. K–Q1 PxR=Qch and White resigned in the face of an inevitable mate.

Tal



Fischer

Bled, 1961

This position arose from a sharp skirmish in the opening in which Black had erred and had to allow the White pawn into the "threshold of paradise" (by the K5–KB6–KN7 route). The threat is 23. BxP, so Black's reply is forced:

22. . . . P–K4 23. PxP!!

White is prepared to give away his Queen for a Rook in order to preserve and fortify his pawn on KN7, a sure guarantee of victory. This example shows that such a pawn can by rights compete in power with the Rook.

23. . . . RxQ 24. PxR Q–B4

Black has to eliminate White's terrible pawns at any cost 24. . . . Q–N3 is equally bad due to 25. KR–B1.

25. BxP

Taking the game into a won ending.

25. . . . Q–KN4 26. BxR QxBP 27. KR–B1 QxP 28. BxPch

And White led the game to a win "on points."

In conclusion, here is an interesting and instructive game in which White's flank pawn managed to penetrate to the seventh rank early in the opening and survived till the very end to decide the fate of the game.

Dubna, 1973

DUTCH DEFENSE

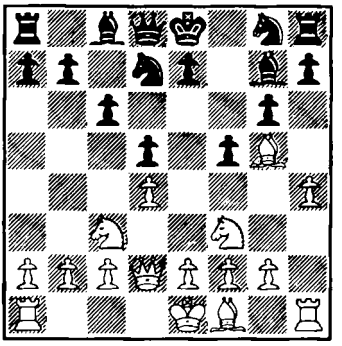
Vaganian *Knezevic*

1. P–Q4 P–KB4 2. B–N5!? P–KN3 3. N–QB3 P–Q4 4. P–KR4! B–N2

On 4. . . . N–KB3 the reply would be 5. BxN! PxB 6. P–K3 with a positional advantage for White.

5. Q–Q2 P–B3 6. N–B3 N–Q2?

Better is 6. . . . N–B3.



7. P–R5! P–KR3 8. PxP! PxB 9. R–R7!

Forcing the exchange of Rooks, since 9. . . . K–B1 (or 9. . . . B–B3) 10. NxNP would give White a strong attack.

9. . . . RxR 10. PxR

By sacrificing a piece, White succeeded in advancing his pawn rapidly (though by a meandering route) as far as the seventh rank. Up to that point the pawn had taken an active part in the attack, but it was not clear what the future had in store for it.

10. . . . KN–B3 11. QxP K–B2 12. QxP N–N3 13. N–K5ch K–B1 14. Q–B4 Q–K1 15. P–KN4! N–Q2 16. O–O–O!

Successfully completing the development of his pieces. The tempting 16. Q–R2 is weaker in view of 16. . . . NxRP 17. QxN NxN 18. PxN BxP with counterplay for Black. No point in giving away the pawn on KR7, and Black would not be able to hold on to the extra piece anyway.

16. . . . NxN 17. PxN Q–B2 18. PxN QxP 19. QxQ BxQ

The pawn seems finally doomed, having lost all ties with its base, since on 20. P–K3 there follows 20. . . . BxP, but . . .

20. P–N5! BxP 21. P–K3 B–B3 22. B–Q3

Having sacrificed a less vital pawn, Black secured "the apple of his eye"—the pawn on KR7. Constituting White's material advantage, that pawn turned out to be the decisive factor in his victory.

The Conclusion

Chess is a game for bold but calculating and circumspect people. The chess player is constantly confronted by a Hamletian question: when can he afford to be a daredevil, and when should he be thrifty and cautious; when to accept a proffered sacrifice, and when to reject it point-blank. But therein lies the complexity and at the same time the incomparable beauty of chess. As a matter of fact, the problem of chess material and sacrifice is pivotal to the chess struggle. If a player is sufficiently conversant with this problem, it means that he is capable of flexible thinking in the course of the game, which, in its turn, helps him win.

The author hopes that this book on the problem of sacrifice in the opening is a useful aid to any reader striving to improve his playing ability.

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Cover design by Gene Siegel

David McKay Company, Inc.
2 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

ISBN 0-679-14103-0